

THE ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP AND MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGY IN THE
EARLY COLD WAR

By
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Dissertation Abstract

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Abstract: The Atlantic Partnership and Middle Eastern Strategy in the Early Cold War

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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In the mid-1950s, serious Middle Eastern challenges temporarily crippled the Atlantic partnership. In many ways, the 1956 Suez Crisis merely illuminated adverse alliance trends, the most fundamental of which fall into two categories.

First, Britain and the United States pursued separate regional strategies. Cold War considerations served as the lodestar by which United States leaders conducted foreign relations. Containing Soviet expansion in any form underpinned American strategic decisions. British objectives entailed additional complexity. In its role as a key Free World state, Britain, like the United States, opposed Communist opportunism. But in Southwest Asia, other factors also influenced British strategy. Foremost among these was a desire to protect what I term the Hashemite-Gulf Arch, a decades-old arrangement of military and economic privileges linking Britain with Iraq, Jordan, and the Gulf sheikhdoms. British dependence on preferential access to Middle Eastern oil made this system a vital national interest. Consequently, London countered *any* antagonists, Communist or otherwise, threatening the Arch. Problems arose when apparent danger from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Arab nationalism compelled Britain to confront those actors precisely while American leaders strove to forestall their alignment with Moscow. Since Britain and the United States disagreed regarding which objective—sustaining containment, or the Hashemite-Gulf Arch—enjoyed primacy, confusion ensued.

Second, mistrust and faulty alliance communication hindered efforts to bridge strategic differences. Anglo-American leaders all too frequently succumbed to

expediency, choosing unilateralism rather than pursuing a time-consuming and difficult search for common ground. Anthony Eden's secret decisions for military operations against Saudi Arabia in 1953 and 1955 are testament to this phenomenon. In both cases he feared alliance consultation would jeopardise British interests; he therefore opted to 'go it alone.' So long as strategic incompatibilities and unilateralist propensities characterised Anglo-American interaction in the Middle East, policy coordination proved nearly impossible.

Abstract: The Atlantic Partnership and Middle Eastern Strategy in the Early Cold War

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Conflicting strategies and ineffective diplomacy plagued Anglo-American interaction in the Middle East during the early and mid-1950s. American leaders, fixated on Cold War success, always gave strategic precedence to containing Soviet aggrandisement. Britain, by contrast, pursued a more complex Middle Eastern objective: protecting what I term the Hashemite-Gulf Arch. Jordan, Iraq, and the Gulf sheikhdoms constituted this Arch, from which flowed abundant petroleum, a critical resource for modern, industrialised societies. Britain, then lacking indigenous supplies of this commodity, depended on Middle Eastern sources in at least two ways. First, through their petroleum extraction, refinement, and distribution, British firms operating in the Hashemite-Gulf Arch generated sizeable tax revenue for the Exchequer and represented a significant overseas investment for Britain. Second, because of its chronic post-war imbalance of payments, Britain required 'sterling oil.' Arch petroleum met this need.

In the early Cold War, Saudi expansionism and pan-Arab nationalism directly threatened the Hashemite-Gulf Arch, therefore menacing vital British economic interests. Anthony Eden, first as Foreign Secretary, then as Prime Minister, played a preponderant role in meeting these threats. He acted most assertively in the Persian Gulf, where, following World War Two, Riyadh sought territorial growth.

Eden's responses to various Gulf crises reflected both continuity and evolution. For instance, he consistently favoured unilateralism. Since Eden feared American opposition to British initiatives, and thought Saudi-American ties precluded impartiality

from his Atlantic allies, he avoided divulging his plans to them. This tendency arose on several occasions, including his reinforcement of Gulf positions in early 1953, his plan for blockading Saudi troops in mid-1953, and his decision two years later to resolve territorial disputes through direct military force. In other ways, though, Eden's approach shifted over time, particularly as circumstances grew steadily grimmer in Eastern Arabia. He at first espoused moderation, as evidenced in his decisions to prohibit attacks against Saudi nationals in disputed territories in 1952, and to resist a temptation for unilateral frontier declaration in 1953. However, as British positions deteriorated in the Arabian Peninsula, he adopted a harder line, culminating in British military operations in Oman and Abu Dhabi in late 1955. These gambits halted the slide in British fortunes in the Persian Gulf.

Whereas Eden favoured direct force in protecting British interests in the Persian Gulf against Saudi threats, in defending Britain's connections with Iraq and Jordan he preferred indirect solutions. Understanding that the diffuse and elusive nature of pan-Arab nationalism—the primary threat in this case—necessitated diplomatic subtlety, Eden strove to maintain close Anglo-Hashemite economic, political and military ties by exploiting existing trends. He turned to advantage the American fixation on collective security, using Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' regional coalitions to justify extending British ties with Iraq.

A direct approach succeeded in the Arabian Peninsula; an indirect strategy failed among the Hashemite kingdoms. Although Eden expected American power to undergird these regional structures—thus protecting the basis on which he had renewed Anglo-Iraqi ties—Dulles' collective-security concept proved both fragile and divisive, and thus a poor choice for sustaining long-term strategic relationships. An expansion in Egyptian involvement with the Soviet bloc accentuated these vulnerabilities. Noting these

liabilities, Eden consequently acted unilaterally to reinforce Anglo-Hashemite links against various regional threats, after failing to secure American support for British initiatives.

The December 1955 failure of a high-level mission to Jordan to consolidate these ties illuminated several trends, all underscoring Britain's growing inability to protect its interests. First, in the struggle for Arab loyalties British adversaries now enjoyed significant advantages regarding two key factors: financial resources and popular will. Saudi money and Nasser's charisma completely outpaced British efforts at shaping events to advantage. Also, deep divisions and grievances surfaced within the Hashemite-Gulf itself. In Jordan's West Bank, for instance, Palestinian dissatisfaction with the existing regime exploded into riots. The resulting violence jeopardised not only internal security, but national survival as well. Jordanian upheaval, in turn, eroded the strength of pro-British factions in neighbouring Iraq.

Predictably, Eden's decision to adopt 'direct' strategies, combined with his increasing penchant for unilateralism, not only in the Persian Gulf but across the Middle East in general, left American leaders fuming. By late 1955, President Dwight Eisenhower and Dulles perceived British assertiveness as an unwitting accomplice to broader adverse regional trends such as intensified Arab-Israeli conflict, surging anti-Westernism, and newfound Soviet success in key Arab states such as Egypt and Syria. Eisenhower and Dulles wanted Eden to cease his provocations of Arab nationalism, or, at minimum, consult American leaders before embarking on controversial initiatives, to allow them an opportunity for minimising damage to Free World positions.

They secured no such *modus vivendi*, however. In fact, these efforts to influence British policy only resulted in Anglo-American confrontation. With a few notable exceptions, British and American diplomats bickered and argued, refusing to make

serious efforts at alliance accommodation while bequeathing a legacy of ill will. Eden expected American support for his efforts to protect vital British interests, even if he neglected to inform Washington prior to these efforts. Conversely, Eisenhower and Dulles suggested Britain harmonise its policies with a broader, containment-oriented approach. Paradoxically, Dulles also wanted Eden to shift away from Middle Eastern collective security, a programme Dulles himself had essentially created a year earlier. These obvious American inconsistencies vexed Eden, particularly as he struggled to respond to growing pressure against British interests.

This turmoil prefigured the 1956 Suez crisis and indeed, many of the key elements characterising alliance interaction during that emergency—tension, disparate objectives, and secret decisions to use force in defiance of preferences of allies—had their roots in earlier crises. Before Suez, Eden's predilection for *faits accomplis* incurred no substantial adverse consequences. Since American leaders ultimately did nothing except complain, the Atlantic partnership survived, providing Eden an incentive to repeat such tactics. His experience indicated unilateralism reaped benefits without inflicting equivalent costs. Therefore, his decision to initiate hostilities against Egypt without consulting, or even informing, his American allies is unsurprising. Equally predictable were poor American reactions to his repetitious unilateralism. These reactions contributed to Eden's eclipse, thus shifting the Atlantic partnership into a more cooperative phase.

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Abbreviations in the Text and Notes

AIOC: Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
AOC: Air Officer Commanding
ARAMCO: Arabian-American Oil Company
BDCC: British Defence Coordination Committee
CIA: Central Intelligence Agency
COS: Chiefs of Staff
COSC: Chiefs of Staff Committee
CPRC: Cabinet Policy Review Committee
CRO: Commonwealth Relations Office
DOD: Department of Defense
DOS: Department of State
ESS: Egypt-Saudi-Syrian (Alliance)
FO: Foreign Office
GHQMELF: General Headquarters Middle East Land Forces
IDF: Israeli Defence Force
IPC: Iraq Petroleum Company
JCS: Joint Chiefs of Staff
JPS: Joint Planning Staff
LDCPG: Local Defence Committee, Persian Gulf
MECM: Middle East Chiefs of Mission
Memcon: Memorandum of Conversation
MOD: Ministry of Defence
MOFF: Muscat and Oman Field Force
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIE: National Intelligence Estimate
NISE: National Intelligence Special Estimate
NSC: National Security Council
OME: Cabinet (Official) Middle East Committee
PAM: Political Agency Muscat
PDO: Petroleum Development Oman, Limited
PM: Prime Minister
PPS: Policy Planning Staff (State Department)
PRPG: Political Residency Persian Gulf
RAF: Royal Air Force
SAS: Special Air Service
SNOPG: Surface Naval Officer, Persian Gulf
Telecon: Telephone Conversation
TOL: Trucial Oman Levies
UK: United Kingdom
UN: United Nations
US: United States

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Introduction

Britain's Hashemite-Gulf Arch in Historical Context

Britain's Middle Eastern position coalesced slowly. As London began securing alternate lines of communication to its Asian possessions in the 19th Century, a British presence in Egypt and the Persian Gulf became highly desirable.¹ Not until World War One, however, did Britain establish major zones of influence beyond these areas. Although the Ottoman Empire had for centuries exercised regional preponderance, Turkish power ebbed precipitously during the Great War, leaving a 'vacuum' of Great Power influence throughout many areas of the Middle East. Britain filled much of the resulting void.² London's original design for replacing vanished Turkish influence conceived an exclusive British sphere south of the 35th Parallel, including the entire Arabian Peninsula, with Suez to mark the approximate western bounds of this solely British zone, while the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and Arabian Sea delineated its eastern terminus.³

This grand design never matured, however. Wartime exigencies and political realities forced Lloyd George's Cabinet to scale down its territorial ambitions.⁴ For strategic reasons—including access to Persian, and later, Mesopotamian, oil, particularly via the British-controlled Anglo-Persian Oil Company and Iraq Petroleum Company—and British interest in rail lines connecting the Mediterranean with the head of the Persian Gulf, London decided to concentrate effort upon this sphere's *northern* and *peripheral* sectors.⁵ Conferences at Paris, San Remo, and Cairo following World War One codified these arrangements: Foreign Office negotiators obtained League of Nations 'mandates'

¹ Balfour-Paul, p. 492; Cohen, p. 69.

² Darwin analyses Britain's "share of the spoils" from World War One.

³ Fisher, pp. 78, 86-87.

⁴ Alangari, pp. 242-43; Karsh, p. 351.

⁵ Chatelus, p. 143; Lukitz, *Iraq*, p. 13; Sluglett, p. 114; Troeller, p. 190.

for the new territorial agglomerations of Transjordan and Iraq. To rule these creations, London selected Hashemites, dynasts from the Arabian Peninsula who had assisted the Allies in World War One by initiating an 'Arab Revolt' against Turkish rule.⁶ Since Britain's long-established political preponderance along the Persian Gulf stood unchallenged, British positions now swept a great unbroken semicircle from the Red Sea to the Arabian Sea, forming what I term the 'Hashemite-Gulf Arch'.⁷ (See Map One)

This Hashemite-Gulf Arch had several appealing strategic characteristics; foremost among these were its mutually-supporting and mutually-reinforcing components. Treaty relations with all member states stipulated Britain's right to raise native armies, and use local territory from which to stage and launch military campaigns.⁸ In Transjordan, for instance, British officials formed the Arab Legion, an army that served under Britain's direct and exclusive control; in Iraq, British forces used Habbaniyah and Shaiba, military outposts near Iraq's two largest cities.⁹ In fact, British air assets operating from these bases first consolidated, then maintained, unpopular Hashemite regimes in Mesopotamia—to say that Hashemite power rested firmly on Royal Air Force capabilities is no exaggeration.¹⁰ Britain therefore had powerful levers for promoting its regional interests, and for checking external or internal threats. Since no foreign powers intruded on this Hashemite-Gulf Arch, the structure enjoyed territorial continuity, and excellent interlocking strength. London could shuttle military forces all along the Arch quickly and easily; if, for instance, trouble arose among Britain's Persian

⁶ Karsh, pp. 309-11.

⁷ In this thesis, 'Hashemite-Gulf Arch' and 'Arch' are synonymous.

⁸ Louis, *Empire*, pp. 322-31, 354-58 summarises British strategic prerogatives in Iraq and Transjordan. Pappe, "Rule" p. 199 describes Transjordan, while Khadduri, p. 312; El-Solh, pp. 24-25 and Sluglett, pp. 181-82 discuss Iraq exclusively.

⁹ Cabinet Memorandum, 17 May 1930, *BDEEP:IP/CP I* no. 8; Fisher, p. 83.

¹⁰ As Lukitz, *Axioms*, pp. 114 & 119 notes: "Britain showed no reluctance to crush [anti-Hashemite] insurgencies in the Shia and Kurdish areas... Britain considered any status-quo reversal to menace its interests, and would automatically bring the air forces into action. The mere presence of British air forces in

Gulf clients (which included Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and other sheikhdoms), the Royal Navy could transport British (or Hashemite) forces from bases in southern Iraq to eliminate any problems. Similarly, if internal disturbances threatened one of the Hashemite monarchies, military forces from other points along the Arch could deploy rapidly by land, sea, or air in support of British interests.¹¹

Despite these advantages, Britain's Middle Eastern Arch also contained some dangerous weaknesses. Chief among these was large-scale Arab discontent regarding British and Hashemite suzerainty. This pervasive anti-colonialism erupted in a series of revolts, including the Iraqi Revolutions of 1919 and 1920.¹² Most Arabs quite simply had no interest in exchanging Ottoman hegemony for Hashemite domination, even if these new overlords wrapped their rule in a 'pan-Arab' mantle.¹³ Controlling this discontent necessitated significant military and political repression, although even those measures failed to prevent radical nationalist elements from influencing events in the Hashemite-Gulf Arch once World War Two erupted. Rashid Ali and his anti-British henchmen in the 'Golden Square' dominated Iraq through mid-1941. And, along the Arch's western and eastern fringes in Egypt and Iran, nationalist forces also surged.

British determination to protect the Arch from foreign intrusion or internal subversion caused London to overplay its hand, thereby accelerating pre-war disintegrative trends. In early 1942, to deal with Egyptian assertiveness, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden—in what one historian describes as a fit of "short-sighted opportunism"—relentlessly imposed British authority over Egypt in a way that provoked

Iraq reinforced [Hashemite] efforts in crushing rebellions." See also Khadduri, pp. 57-58; Lukitz, *Iraq*, p. 16; Darby, p. 90; Sluglett, pp. 267-69; Silverfarb, *Informal*, p. 25.

¹¹ Louis, *Empire*, p. 327, aptly describes these points of British strength along the Hashemite-Gulf Arch as "police stations."

¹² Tauber, Chapter 11. See also M. Lewis, p. 35; Sluglett, p. 41.

¹³ Lukitz, *Iraq*, pp. 14, 74; Karsh, p. 352.

and antagonised local opinion.¹⁴ At that time, Egypt played a more significant role in British global strategy than did the Hashemite-Gulf Arch, but defence of Egypt against foreign intrusion also defended the Arch. Six months earlier, Eden orchestrated a similar imposition of British power in Iran, teaming with Moscow to topple that country's Sovereign, Reza Shah Pahlavi, after he demonstrated disloyal tendencies.¹⁵ Although Pahlavi, on balance, lacked domestic support—popular opinion perceived his dynasty as a foreign creation—many in Iran saw Eden's gambit as yet another sordid episode in a long history of self-interested and deliberate foreign interference in their country's internal affairs. Anti-British feelings rose accordingly, culminating a decade later with nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry, an event with profound regional significance.

Perhaps most damaging of all with respect to long-term ramifications, though, was Britain's decision to overthrow Rashid Ali, and restore forcibly Hashemite regent Abdul Ilah and pro-British strongman Nuri al Said in Baghdad.¹⁶ From its Transjordanian bases, the Arab Legion made major contributions to this military campaign.¹⁷ One scholar observes that most Iraqis viewed Britain's manoeuvre as the “re-establishment of an undemocratic regime dominated by a small group of wealthy and repressive politicians unrepresentative of Iraq's ethnic and sectarian balance and who generally demonstrated considerably more concern for personal financial aggrandisement than for the welfare of the great bulk of the population.”¹⁸ Reinstating Abdul Ilah undoubtedly stimulated a fierce anti-monarchical backlash within Iraq's army and population.¹⁹ Mainstream Iraqi public opinion increasingly viewed the ‘Old Gang’—Iraq's pro-British conservative

¹⁴ Kolinsky, pp. 95-96, 103, 109. Morsy is somewhat more sympathetic regarding Eden's Egyptian policies during World War II.

¹⁵ Eshragi; Yergin, p. 465.

¹⁶ Louis, *Empire*, p. 313; Penrose, 103-5.

¹⁷ El-Solh, pp. 124-25.

¹⁸ Silverfarb, p. 19.

¹⁹ Makiya, p. 21.

elite—as mere British “slaves and collaborators,” while exhibiting outright contempt for any policies stipulating Anglo-Iraqi cooperation.²⁰ As World War Two raged, Nuri and his Old Gang confreres used numerous draconian measures to undercut nationalism, such as imposition of martial law, censorship of nearly all independent media, mass incarceration of political dissidents, and widespread election tampering. Nuri also purged the Iraqi army several times, unsuccessfully seeking to root out anti-Hashemite cells, societies and organisations. British officials were well aware of these dangerous and autocratic trends in Hashemite rule, and recognised many adverse long-term aspects of Old Gang corruption and decadence.²¹ They chose, however, not to stimulate political, economic, or social reform.²²

Another fundamental Arch vulnerability related to ambiguity regarding the Arabian Peninsula’s boundaries. This region’s vast and desolate deserts defied normal political demarcation. Prior to World War One, British officials had been content to control a narrow coastal strip, while studiously avoiding involvement in Arabian hinterlands—where wandering nomads and warring tribes made boundaries essentially indeterminate—so long as no major threat menaced Britain’s littoral sphere.²³ Ibn Saud’s rise as a powerful political personality following World War One changed everything. The British government now faced a potential challenger for Persian Gulf hegemony, and needed to preserve the Arch’s eastern span. As London saw things, an optimal solution entailed political boundaries that protected Britain’s sphere from Saudi expansion, while simultaneously mollifying Ibn Saud to forestall his alignment with anti-British forces; that Riyadh’s Eastern Arabian claims possessed at least some legitimacy posed

²⁰ Eppel, “Decline” pp. 186-87; M. Lewis, pp. 45-46; Ashton, *Problem*, pp. 28-29; El-Solh, p. 134; Darwin.

²¹ Silverfarb, *Twilight*, pp. 81-82.

²² Owen, p. 170; Penrose, pp. 107-8.

²³ Kelly, *Sultanate*, p. 9; Burrows, pp. 89, 93. Burrows, an Arabian expert, was Britain’s Persian Gulf Political Resident, 1953-58.

significant problems for this plan.²⁴ British officials tried repeatedly to persuade Ibn Saud to accept restrictive territorial limitations, thereby preserving Britain's exclusive zone, oil concessions, and territorial continuity.²⁵

Saudi leaders failed to take this bait, however, and for decades, borders remained ill-defined. Riyadh sought boundaries reflecting the true political situation, rather than some arbitrary British demarcation, and, as Saudi wealth and influence grew, its power to attain favourable outcomes similarly increased, posing a real threat to British spheres.²⁶ The lack of meaningful authority by London or its clients in many parts of Eastern Arabia also spelled trouble for British corporate interests, most notably oil consortia such as IPC and its subsidiaries. Assertions of independence by various sheikhs and potentates forced Britain to undertake aerial and naval demonstrations of force to compel acceptance of London's economic privileges.²⁷

After World War Two ended, political and social strains within the Arch accelerated, particularly in Iraq. Britain's Labour Government noted this unfavourable situation; Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin observed that British Middle Eastern foreign policy rested dangerously on "too narrow a footing, mainly on the personalities of kings, princes or pashas."²⁸ Bevin, who favoured shifting British strategic emphasis away from Egypt and toward the Hashemite-Gulf Arch,²⁹ tentatively attempted to broaden British nodes of support,³⁰ but nationalist forces had by now become so endemic and powerful that retention of any form of 'British connection' was an absolute impossibility unless

²⁴ Leatherdale, pp. 229, 231, 241. Darwin outlines the ambiguity of British policy in Arabia in the 1930s, while Silverfarb, "Eve," describes late 1930s British anxiety over potential pro-Fascist Saudi strategic orientation, and its influence on Foreign Office negotiating tactics. See also Kostiner, p. 134.

²⁵ Wilkinson, *Frontiers*, p. x.

²⁶ Cabinet Memorandum, 19 November 1937, BDEEP IP/CP I no. 18 contains Eden's prescient observation that "Saudi prestige may yet prove a formidable Middle Eastern force."

²⁷ Leatherdale, pp. 242-43.

²⁸ Quoted in N. Owen, p. 3.

²⁹ Louis, *Dissolution*, p. 339.

³⁰ Gerke; Kingston, Chapter One.

conservative elites maintained their autocracy.³¹ To loosen Hashemite bonds would rapidly destabilise the keystone in Britain's Arch, since few if any Iraqis beyond the royal clique wanted even a semblance of Anglo-Iraqi alliance. Therefore, London soon abandoned its brief experiment in political pluralism and reform. Subsequent Old Gang crackdowns catalysed accelerating anti-royalist sentiments not only within Iraq's army, but throughout Iraqi society as well.³²

Further stimuli to growing nationalism emerged in the late 1940s, when, in an effort to head off a balance-of-payments catastrophe in Britain, London repeatedly enacted policies injurious to Iraq's financial health, including unilateral suspension of key clauses in the 1932 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, and disruption of Baghdad's attempts to gain financial autonomy.³³ The intersection of these destabilising episodes—Hashemite tyranny, British exploitation, nationalist fervor, and social dislocation—plunged Iraq into an anarchical netherworld, gripped with endemic famine, poverty, chaos, and widespread discontent and unrest.³⁴ Significant upheavals recurred at frequent intervals, including the so-called 'Kirkuk massacre' of Summer 1946, when IPC workers unsuccessfully attempted to organise,³⁵ and early 1948's Wathbah riots, which erupted after the Foreign Office and Old Gang representatives secretly extended British basing, economic, and political privileges in Iraq.³⁶ While these negotiations represented a windfall for London, preserving as they did Iraq's position in the Hashemite-Gulf Arch, subsequent events illustrated in sharp relief the yawning chasm between Old Gang initiatives and the Iraqi

³¹ Silverfarb, *Twilight*, pp. 82-3.

³² Louis, *Empire*, pp. 317-318. Glubb, p. 368, Chartouni-Dubarry, p. 21, and El-Solh, p. 87 describe anti-Hashemite sentiments in Iraq's army.

³³ Silverfarb, *Twilight*, pp. 118-21; Eppel, "Decline" pp. 190-91; Kingston, pp. 33-34.

³⁴ Third Progress Report on NSC Paper 47/2, 26 January 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 20; Eppel, "Elite."

³⁵ Khadduri, pp. 257, 360; Kingston, p. 98.

³⁶ Farouk-Sluglett, p. 127; Penrose, p. 113. Silverfarb, *Twilight*, pp. 126-55 summarises the Wathbah, which resulted in at least one hundred Iraqi deaths.

zeitgeist.³⁷ Via the Wathbah, public opinion in Iraq, which overwhelmingly rejected close ties with London, forced Baghdad to nullify extension of British privileges. Although these riots persuaded Britain to take a low profile in Iraq's political arena, widespread demonstrations in November 1952—to which the Old Gang responded by declaring open-ended martial law, and abolishing all political parties—showed nationalist intensity continued undimmed into the next decade.³⁸ British leaders faced an unenviable task: to extend the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty (thereby preserving the Arch) necessitated policies that ran squarely counter to prevailing opinion in Iraq. Success in such a program required creativity, imagination, and impeccable timing.

Increasing Middle Eastern superpower involvement complicated Britain's already-precarious situation. Soviet assertiveness in Iran immediately after World War Two demonstrated Moscow's strong interest in extending its influence along the Hashemite-Gulf Arch's northern approaches; these manoeuvres alarmed American officials who, above all, sought to contain Soviet expansion. British officials held similar anxieties, but feared the growth of American political influence in the Arch as well. An increasing role for Washington would, for instance, potentially allow Iraq to break free of its dependence on British military equipment and spare parts by utilising an alternative supplier.

Postwar Indian independence caused additional difficulties. Indian troops had traditionally served as a 'fire brigade' for quelling Persian Gulf problems.³⁹ In 1913, for instance, when Eastern Arabian tribes prepared to annihilate Muscat, Whitehall

³⁷ The Foreign Office—which when originally negotiating the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in the early 1930s tried but failed to secure British privileges *in perpetuity*—preferred early action to the risk of a 'last-minute' strategy. (Cabinet Memorandum, 17 May 1930, *BDEEP:IP/CP I* no. 8) This condominium expired in November 1957, unless a mutually acceptable revision took effect before that date, so in 1948 London sought an extension. Khadduri (pp. 267-70) comments that the Wathbah represented the "culmination in a series of episodes demonstrating public lack of confidence in the ruling [Iraqi] oligarchy"

³⁸ M. Lewis, p. 48; Glubb, p. 298; Penrose, p. 118.

³⁹ Darwin.

dispatched Indian forces to rescue the Sultanate from certain disaster. A similar episode transpired in 1928, and Indian soldiers helped crush uprisings in Iraq in 1920 and 1941.⁴⁰ This bulwark evaporated when India gained independence in 1947. Now, the Hashemite-Gulf Arch required even greater self-reinforcement and cohesion to insure its own survival.⁴¹

As the 1950s opened, therefore, British leaders faced critical regional challenges. They needed to circumvent Arab nationalism, thwart potential Soviet expansion, minimise the unfavourable consequences of growing American influence, maintain close connections between the Hashemite monarchies, and preserve Britain's Persian Gulf sphere of influence against Saudi pretensions. Unfortunately, although each of these goals *in isolation* probably lay within reach, as a whole they were mutually exclusive and self-defeating. An adversarial posture toward nationalism, for instance, tended to enhance Soviet opportunities.

When the Conservative Party regained power in late 1951, Anthony Eden, who had done so much to protect the Hashemite-Gulf Arch during World War Two, inherited the burden of reconciling these disparate objectives.⁴² Over the next five years, Eden—first as Foreign Secretary, then as Prime Minister—attempted to preserve Britain's Middle Eastern position; significant portions of this study will analyse Eden's strategy, particularly in the framework of Anglo-American relations. On balance, Eden failed to achieve his goals; the Cold War context of Anglo-American interaction forced a number of divergencies between London and Washington, particularly on issues such as nationalism. Whereas Eden typically favoured firmness, American leaders advocated a

⁴⁰ DOS Memorandum, 9 January 1956, USNA RG 59 786E.00/1-956; Rentz, pp. 48-9; Joyce, *Sultanate*, p. 29; Tauber, pp. 312-13.

⁴¹ Blyth.

⁴² Eden, p. 352.

softer touch in order to limit Soviet leverage.⁴³ This pattern of contradictory alliance tactics escalated after Josef Stalin's death in 1953. The Kremlin temporarily abandoned heavy-handed foreign policy, adopting more subtle stratagems, including direct cultivation of Third World independence movements. In combination with what seemed to be striking Soviet breakthroughs in nuclear and ballistic technology—which threatened to give Moscow additional credibility with non-aligned nations—this new approach compelled a soft American touch in the Middle East, while Washington attempted to maintain ties with all but the most fervent anti-Western elements there.

This 'big tent' strategy collided with Eden's perspective, in which Arab neutralism constituted an unacceptable minimum standard since non-alignment undercut Britain's Arch. Disparate British and American geopolitical assessments sparked many controversies, culminating in 1955 and 1956, when Washington and London failed to coordinate their policies regarding Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Arab-Israeli peace process, the Baghdad Pact, and the Suez Canal. Unilateralist tendencies, in tandem with mistrust within the Atlantic alliance, exacerbated these episodes, and, for a time, rendered Anglo-American strategic differences nearly irreconcilable. Only after Harold Macmillan succeeded Eden in early 1957 did Washington and London once again enjoy relative harmony in their interactions. Although neither Britain nor the United States abandoned its fundamental strategic framework, the consultation, cooperation and confidence recently absent emerged anew, enabling these allies to overcome their incompatibilities in ways that had been impossible in the early and mid 1950s.

⁴³ Memcon: DOS and JCS, 2 May 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* pp. 113-19 foreshadows these Anglo-American strategic divergencies.

Chapter One

The Hashemite-Gulf Arch: Protecting Its Eastern Span, 1949-54

Seeds of Anglo-Saudi Conflict, 1949-1952

In 1949, Anglo-Saudi relations deteriorated noticeably. In that year, Baghdad unveiled a specific plan for achieving formal Syrian-Iraqi union under Hashemite auspices.¹ Ibn Saud, who had struggled against Hashemite dynasts for decades, suspected long-term Anglo-Iraqi designs to encircle Saudi Arabia and eventually conquer Hejaz, ancestral seat of Hashemite power but now wholly within Saudi territory.² Therefore, he strongly protested against this potential federation.³ London generally opposed expansionist Iraqi plots, although Saudi attempts to frustrate this scheming caused resentment at the Foreign Office. Iraq's grand design collapsed, however, after a Damascene coup late that year brought to power Colonel Adib Shishakli and his entourage of militantly anti-federation elements.⁴

Another challenge for Anglo-Saudi relations that year had its roots in petroleum pricing and distribution. As Britain strove to strengthen its tenuous balance-of-payments position by curtailing 'hard' currency (dollars in particular) outflows from the sterling area, American companies encountered new constraints on where they could market oil.⁵ These restrictions cut Saudi revenues significantly; Riyadh probably perceived such

¹ F. Jamali Memorandum, June 1949, FJP pp. 49-50; D. Acheson to H. Truman, 6 October 1949, *FRUS 1949 V* p. 181; Seale, pp. 78, 80; Rathmell, pp. 27-30, 55-56. FJP pp. 45-46 is also valuable.

² US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 17 November 1949, *FRUS 1949 V* pp. 1618-9; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 17 November 1949, *FRUS 1949 V* p. 1621; Memcon: Prince Faisal and G. McGhee, 19 March 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 1134. Alangari, pp. 171-76 describes Hashemite-Saudi tensions; Safran, pp. 62-63 is also valuable. Louis, *Empire*, pp. 620-28 and Eppel, "Nuri", p. 157 discuss political contexts for Iraqi-Syrian Union.

³ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 3 February 1949, *FRUS 1949 V* pp. 1578-9; UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 6 February 1949, PRO FO 371/75077 E1726.

⁴ Memcon: D. Acheson and E. Bevin, 11 November 1949, *FRUS 1949 V* p. 1482; FO Memorandum, 30 November 1949, PRO FO 371/75508 E14433; DOS Memorandum: "Political Union of Syria and Iraq," 25 April 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* pp. 1206-10; DOS Memorandum: "Iraq Policy Statement," 9 November 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 651; Rathmell, p. 58.

⁵ Anderson, pp. 184-85; Painter, pp. 163-64.

policies for salvaging British financial positions as prejudicial to Saudi economic strength.

Escalating Eastern Arabian boundary problems complicated matters. That Autumn, Riyadh, with ARAMCO assistance, asserted new claims encompassing significantly more territory than its earlier demands, including Buraimi, a large oasis with ten thousand inhabitants, encompassing nine villages of varying size, situated approximately 75 miles from the Gulf of Oman, and an equivalent distance from the Persian Gulf.⁶ (See Maps Two & Three) Buraimi sat astride five main caravan routes, had the only water supply for dozens of miles in any direction, and commanded northern approaches to rugged Omani hinterlands.⁷

Ibn Saud quite likely advanced his new claims in response to recent British attempts to secure Bedouin loyalties in and around Buraimi, including a February 1949 expedition to that location. British oil companies needed tribal assistance at Buraimi to launch petroleum-prospecting expeditions in Fahud, a desolate region a hundred miles south of the oasis, and today the location of Oman's largest oil fields.⁸ This project ended in abject humiliation and defeat when local tribes all refused to accept the authority of British clients, Sultan of Muscat Said Bin Timur and Sheikh Shakhbut of Abu Dhabi, and threatened to negotiate their own oil deals. Sultan Said, in fact, opposed these expeditions, presumably understanding his extremely precarious position vis-à-vis Buraimi tribal leaders, relenting only after IPC officials pressed for his acquiescence.⁹

Ibn Saud probably perceived this episode not only as a vivid exhibition of British and Muscati weakness, but also as the first move in a long-term campaign by those states

⁶ Henderson, p. 72.

⁷ Rentz, pp. 115-16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-54, 68-9; Wilkinson, *Tradition*, p. 285; Kechichian, p. 41.

⁹ PRPG to FO, 25 January 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E1565.

to gain control over key points in disputed Eastern Arabian territories.¹⁰ Recognising the fatally weak positions of its clients in these potentially oil-rich areas, the Foreign Office had in fact recently initiated a campaign to establish Muscati authority there, intending to end any ambiguity over sovereignty while erecting a buffer against growing Saudi power.¹¹ Accordingly, British officials requested IPC “take a more active line in pressing claims, and...extend [its] operations to the furthest limits of concession areas,” a policy with which IPC roundly concurred.¹²

Collisions that year between British and American oil companies, including the so-called ‘Stobart incident’ of late April, in which British political officer Patrick Stobart confronted ARAMCO crews who had traveled along the Persian Gulf coast to ‘Suffuk Wells,’ fifty miles east of the Qatar Peninsula, further exacerbated regional tensions.¹³ To dissuade any additional competitive reconnoitering, while simultaneously demonstrating British power to Saudi Arabia and to local inhabitants, Persian Gulf Political Resident Rupert Hay arranged for low-level Royal Air Force overflights of disputed territories in June.¹⁴

Paradoxically, Anglo-Saudi negotiations in late 1949 only increased tensions. When Saudi diplomats maintained their new territorial assertions, Foreign Office

¹⁰ R.E. Bird Memorandum, 14 March 1949, PRO FO 371/74973 E3597 describes early 1949 Buraimi incidents.

¹¹ FO Memorandum, 29 April 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E4046; C.J. Pelly Memorandum, 1 May 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E5825; PRPG to FO, 4 May 1949, FO 371/75018 E5773/G. British intelligence predicted Said would “likely never establish authority” in Buraimi’s environs, because he was “too weak.”

¹² FO to PAM, 20 October 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E12657/G laments “the [Sultan of Muscat’s] lack of any real authority...[and] incapab[ility] of enforcing authority” in Buraimi and Oman, while PRPG to FO, 28 October 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E13582G acknowledges that Sultan Said “exercises little to no control at Buraimi.” PAM to FO, 25 & 26 September 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E116613 and E116614, PRPG to FO, 27 September 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E12658, and OME Memorandum, 19 December 1949, PRO CAB 134/501 ME (49) 35 outline British/IPC ‘forward policies’ in Eastern Arabia.

¹³ P.D. Stobart Memorandum, 27 April 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E5825 has Stobart’s account of this episode. See also FO Memorandum, 7 May 1949, PRO FO 371/75508 E6641G; Memcon: DOS and ARAMCO officials, 25 April 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 41; OME Memorandum, 18 July 1949, PRO CAB 134/501 ME (49) 25; Heard-Bey, pp. 300-303; Thessiger, p. 272; Henderson, p. 81.

authorities equivalently expanded British claims, now insisting Saudi Arabia respect the so-called ‘Blue Line.’ Britain had negotiated this demarcation, which approximated 50 degrees 30 minutes east longitude, with Ottoman envoys in July 1913, but later explicitly voided Blue Line boundary clauses. That no government ever ratified this condominium, least of all Saudi Arabia—which did not participate in Blue Line negotiations—made Britain’s restoration of this nullified article particularly provocative to Riyadh.¹⁵

Upon noting this increasing controversy, Washington established a stance of strict neutrality in the form of ‘constructive impartiality,’ in which State Department officials worked at bridging Anglo-Saudi disparities to facilitate early, amicable, and bilateral solutions to Eastern Arabian boundary feuds. This posture lasted six years. Since the United States had important allies and commercial interests on *both sides* of this dispute—American corporations owned all of ARAMCO, and roughly one-quarter of IPC—giving preferential treatment to claims of either party made little sense. State Department emphasis, therefore, focused on advancing a settlement with all deliberate speed, since American officials anticipated lingering boundary disputes might hinder “orderly [regional] development and tranquillity,” and imperil Western access to vital Gulf petroleum. Official American figures pegged *known* Gulf reserves at 40 billion barrels and *estimated* Gulf reserves at 150 billion barrels—four times the rest of the world combined. Additionally, controversies would only become more intractable when

¹⁴ PRPG to FO, 12 July 1949; M. Walker Minute, 25 July 1949, PRO FO 371/74992 E8822. RAF Brigands from 84th Squadron, Habbaniyah, Iraq, executed these missions. Local tribesmen fired upon British aircraft as they overflew Buraimi.

¹⁵ Schofield, pp. 19-20; Kelly, “Sovereignty”; Wilkinson, *Frontiers*, pp. xxiv, xxxi, 127; *Tradition*, p. 287; “Synopsis”, pp. 95-6, 100-1, 105-6. Wilkinson, who assesses Britain’s shift to a Blue Line stance as “weak, unrealistic and fundamentally dishonest,” notes that Britain selected that demarcation not because it represented realistic frontiers, nor because it had any meaningful legal status, but because British Gulf clients “were so weak that the only way Britain could save its sphere of influence was to keep these clients from negotiating their own frontiers.” A unilateral Blue Line mandate removed any need for negotiations. Leatherdale, pp. 229-30, 237, 250, similarly castigates British Blue Line strategy as “invalid, impractical, untenable, illegal, short-sighted, unrealistic, artificial, arbitrary, anachronistic, and based on dubious

and if crews located oil fields along disputed frontiers—American and British survey teams were by this time zealously searching for petroleum throughout Eastern Arabia—so Washington suggested temporary limitations on oil exploration. Quick settlement, rather than protracted negotiations, offered another offset to this potentially inflammatory issue, American officials thought.¹⁶

On numerous occasions over the next few years, ARAMCO representatives petitioned State Department officials to pressure the Foreign Office into dropping its Blue Line claims, and adopt a more conciliatory boundary stance. ARAMCO—which thought Britain sought to exercise dominance and to perpetuate a “Nineteenth Century imperialist system”—also wanted Britain to allow its Gulf clients to negotiate on their own behalf, rather than through British intermediaries, a precondition London demanded. American oil executives maintained that British involvement merely complicated an already difficult situation. ARAMCO also found British negotiating tactics presumptive and condescending. However, Washington maintained its broad posture of neutrality. The State Department, recognising the vitality of American ties with Britain *and* Saudi Arabia, merely urged each side to negotiate in good faith, while embracing moderation rather than advancing exaggerated claims. Washington also proposed that British clients might at least *observe* Anglo-Saudi talks, even if London retained ultimate decision-making authority.¹⁷

rationale,” and makes a powerful case that British officials knew of these shortcomings in their position, but had nothing else on which to stand.

¹⁶ W. Jackson to H. Labouisse, 10 January 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 10; Memcon: Prince Faisal and G. McGhee, 19 March 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 1142; D. Acheson to US Embassy London, 30 November 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 117; DOS Memorandum: “Middle Eastern Oil,” 1 September 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 76; Memcon: H. Grady and S. Scott, 8 December 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 620; DOS Policy Paper: “Saudi Arabia,” 5 February 1951, *FRUS 1951* V pp. 1027-42; J.E. Webb to Treasury Department, 25 October 1951, *FRUS 1951* V p. 333. Yergin, pp. 428-9 describes growing American dependence on foreign oil. Thesiger, p. 7, contains information about Eastern Arabian IPC exploration.

¹⁷ Memcon: ARAMCO and DOS Representatives, 31 January 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 18; F. Wilkins and R. Funkhouser Memorandum, 15 March 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 34; Memcon: ARAMCO and DOS Representatives, 5 October 1950, *FRUS 1950* V pp. 101-102.

These exhortations did not harmonise Saudi and British positions. As before, neither side preferred compromise in the interest of securing a resolution. Assuming that only Ibn Saud's charisma and leadership maintained Saudi national cohesion, British officials suggested a simple strategy for the Arabian Peninsula near the end of World War Two: London should stand fast until Ibn Saud died, then, once disintegration began, reconsolidate its Arabian position. Wilkinson asserts that this facet of British strategy persisted well after World War Two.¹⁸ At the very least, London's stance in the late 1940s displayed lingering dilatory elements.¹⁹ Some British officials privately advocated serious Anglo-Saudi negotiations, but chronic pessimism, along with expectations of increased success if "Britain shows firmness [rather] than yielding," characterised these suggestions.²⁰ Overall, such attitudes appeared distinctly progressive in comparison to mainstream Foreign Office perspectives, which branded Riyadh's attitude "impertinent," and Saudi claims "extravagant," while sticking by decades-old assertions that Blue Line clauses constituted acceptable legal guidelines for establishing boundaries. Washington soon learned of Britain's intention to "let matters drift." *Ad hoc* commercial agreements provided an adequate short-term solution, British authorities thought. Additionally, London informed Ibn Saud that Saudi Arabia bore all burden of proof for maintaining territorial claims.²¹ Under no circumstances would British clients negotiate on their own behalf; London refused to enter talks with Saudi Arabia until Riyadh admitted Britain's right to handle *all* negotiations for Abu Dhabi and Muscat.²²

¹⁸ Wilkinson, *Tradition*, p. 289, and *Boundaries*, pp. 235, 292.

¹⁹ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 31 March 1949, PRO FO 371/75108 E4489 and FO to UK Embassy Jeddah, 7 May 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E5327 show British dilatory tactics persisted as of 1949, although other urgent trends—primarily centred on oil issues—increasingly necessitated more positive measures.

²⁰ FO Memorandum, 7 May 1949, PRO FO 371/75508 E6641G; G. W. Furlonge Memorandum, 22 January 1951, PRO FO 371/91310 EA1201/10.

²¹ Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 20 November 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 114.

²² FO to Ibn Saud, 11 July 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 100; DOS Memorandum: "Middle Eastern Oil," 1 September 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 76; FO to DOS, 9 October 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 117; Memcon: DOS

The official Saudi stance was only slightly more encouraging. After coordinating with ARAMCO, Riyadh suggested a neutral 'fact-finding commission' investigate disputed Eastern Arabian territory and report its findings to Washington as a basis for future discussions.²³ Although State Department officials saw some value in this proposal—and thought a commission of arbitrators might serve as a suitable vehicle to follow up where 'fact-finders' left off—the American Ambassador in Jeddah scolded ARAMCO for attempting to influence official policy.²⁴

As before, Washington espoused non-alignment in Eastern Arabian boundary controversies. State Department officials, however, simultaneously worked to improve Saudi-American relations, which had suffered a number of recent blows. Not least was United States support for Israel's creation, a project Saudi leaders vehemently opposed.²⁵ Despite differences of opinion with his American counterparts on this and other issues, Ibn Saud pressed vigorously for formal alliance with the United States, as he had done periodically over the past few years.²⁶ He no doubt realised growing Anglo-Saudi estrangement surrounded his monarchy with potentially hostile states—Aden, Hashemite monarchs in Jordan and Iraq, and British Gulf clients all had far stronger ties to Britain than to Saudi Arabia. For a while, American officials resisted these entreaties by falling back on traditional American distaste for outright alliances.²⁷ By Autumn 1950, however, President Harry Truman acquiesced with Ibn Saud's proposal, offering Riyadh a security

and ARAMCO Officials, 19 March 1951, *FRUS 1951* V p. 286; Memcon: DOS and ARAMCO Officials, 20 June 1951, *FRUS 1951* V p. 318, Wilkinson, *Boundaries*, p. 190.

²³ B. Berry Memorandum, "Persian Gulf Boundary Problems" 20 April 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 38; DOS Memorandum: "Arabian Boundary Dispute" 20 April 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 39; Memcon: DOS and ARAMCO officials, 25 April 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 41.

²⁴ Memcon: Prince Faisal and G. McGhee, 19 March 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 1144; Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 12 June 1950, *FRUS 1950* V p. 53.

²⁵ Memcon: H. Truman and J. Childs, 28 September 1949, *FRUS 1949* V p. 1614; Childs, p. 153.

²⁶ DOS Memorandum, 9 July 1951, *FRUS 1951* V p. 1059 notes that one of Ibn Saud's first direct requests for a Saudi-American alliance came in June 1947. See also Rieck, p. 321.

²⁷ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 10 December 1949, *FRUS 1949* V p. 1627; Memcon: G. McGhee and Y. Yassin, 22 March 1950, GMP Box 2; J. Childs Memorandum, 3 April 1950, GMP Box 2.

guarantee in which the United States pledged to "preserve Saudi Arabian independence and territorial integrity."²⁸

Truman's rationale for modifying the United States position on this issue is not entirely clear, although several factors probably contributed to his decision. First, the outbreak of hostilities in Northeast Asia had demonstrated obvious drawbacks in conservative delineation of global defence perimeters. Secretary of State Dean Acheson's January 12th 1950 announcement that direct American security obligations for all practical purposes excluded both Korea and Taiwan resulted in Soviet, North Korean, and Chinese attempts at territorial aggrandisement in those regions.²⁹ Although Communist invasion of the Arabian Peninsula did not appear imminent in Autumn 1950, Truman apparently wanted to relieve any ambiguity—American or otherwise—regarding the scope of United States interests there. In promulgating this promise, Truman acted consistently with broader Autumn 1950 strategic initiatives, in which Washington guaranteed the security of key Western nations, including Australia and New Zealand.

Probably even more important in Truman's assessment, however, was American recognition of a quantum increase in Arabian oil production, which had grown tenfold since the end of World War Two. Average daily yields now stood at 555,000 barrels, and showed every sign of continued increase.³⁰ Because warfare had erupted in Korea, the Free World needed as much oil as possible for its military efforts there. By early autumn widespread shortages plagued the West.³¹ Problems in Iran complicated this adverse situation. Due to fierce disagreements over currency convertibility, corporate structure,

²⁸ H. Truman to Ibn Saud, 31 October 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 1191; DOS Policy Paper: "US Interests in Saudi Arabia" 5 February 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* pp. 1027-42; Yergin, p. 428.

²⁹ Thornton, pp. 228-29.

³⁰ Memcon: H. Truman and J. Childs, 28 September 1949, *FRUS 1949 V* p. 1614; DOS Memorandum: "Middle Eastern Oil," 1 September 1950 *FRUS 1950 V* p. 76; Lackner, p. 44. WMP lists monthly Saudi petroleum production throughout the 1950s. By mid-decade, production had nearly doubled from its 1950 level, reaching 352 million barrels per annum.

³¹ R. Funkhouser to G. McGhee, 14 September 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 97.

and other issues, Tehran's cancellation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) concession appeared imminent. In light of gargantuan Iranian petroleum production—700,000 barrels daily, more than any other country—and regional perceptions that British concessionaires extracted excessive profits from their host nations, American officials repeatedly and intensely implored British oil executives to adopt a conciliatory stance, thereby offsetting disruptive confrontations between AIOC and Iranian nationalism. As of Truman's decision to guarantee Saudi Arabian security, however, the British consortium resisted compromise.³² To complicate matters, Iraqi leaders also pondered terminating all Western hydrocarbon concessions in that country.³³ Thus, assuring Saudi support for Western petroleum requirements gained additional importance.³⁴

Problems in Iran not only helped cement official United States commitments to Riyadh, they also provided ARAMCO executives with convenient new lobbying tactics in their efforts at persuading the State Department to pressure Britain into accepting a 'fact-finding commission' to adjudicate Eastern Arabian boundaries. Less than one week after escalating AIOC-Iranian tensions culminated in Majlis legislation to nationalise Iran's oil industry, ARAMCO representatives delivered "outspoken criticism of general [British] attitudes" in the Middle East, suggesting British leaders "thr[ew] their weight

³² Memcon: G. McGhee and AIOC Executives, 24 January 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 14; H. Grady to DOS, 31 October 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* pp. 612-13; DOS Memorandum: "US-UK Divergencies on Iran" 20 December 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 634; MECM Conclusions and Recommendations, 21 February 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 71; NSC Staff Study 107, 14 March 1951, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 6; GMOH; EWOH; FWOH/II; Onslow, p. 128. Persuading AIOC to compromise regarding its concessionary agreements constituted a long-term component of American policy vis-à-vis Iran, but progress proved difficult. Bill, pp. 57-74, Painter, pp. 173-189 and Louis, *Empire*, pp. 653-67 contain excellent analyses of contentious Iranian-AIOC relations, and Washington's role in this confrontation. Lloyd, p. 6 notes that British officials saw American efforts as a deliberate attempt to "undermine [British positions] steadily." Macmillan, pp. 343, 346 and Longrigg, p. 173 express similar perspectives, while a more balanced view from an actual participant is in Falla, p. 80.

³³ Memcon: G. McGhee and American Oil Executives, 11 May 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 51; DOS to US Embassy Baghdad, 28 February 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 284; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 17 March 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 285; D. Acheson to US Embassy London, 31 March 1951 *FRUS 1951 V* p. 296; Penrose, p. 144.

³⁴ NSC Staff Study, 14 March 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 99; Memcon: FO and DOS Officials, 2 April 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 105.

around" to resolve regional disputes. ARAMCO's implication, of course, was that only official American intervention in the ongoing Arabian boundary problems could shake London from its belligerent and stubborn attitudes.³⁵

When this ploy failed, ARAMCO soon intensified its attack on British Middle Eastern policies, informing State Department officials that London sought to "bully and dictate to" those with whom it had quarrels, rather than negotiate in good faith. Such antiquated notions only contributed to growing regional "hatred and suspicion" of Britain.³⁶ Although Acheson and his subordinates strongly disagreed with British tactics regarding AIOC nationalisation, congruent State Department-ARAMCO assessments about Iran did not translate into official United States support for Saudi Arabia in its boundary disputes with Britain. Washington reaffirmed its role as a "friend of both parties."³⁷

Intermittent Anglo-Saudi negotiations in 1951, including an August conference in London, yielded little substantive progress, although these talks resulted in a 'Standstill Agreement' in which Britain and Saudi Arabia pledged not to send any political officials or military forces into disputed areas.³⁸ For IPC, conditions at Buraimi had certainly not improved since the 1949 debacles there. In fact, by 1951, company strategy had shifted in favour of securing full-scale independence for Buraimi. IPC authorities, despairing that Muscat would ever establish any authority beyond a narrow coastal strip, hoped to

³⁵ Memcon: DOS and ARAMCO Officials, 19 March 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 286.

³⁶ Memcon: DOS and ARAMCO Officials, 20 June 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 318.

³⁷ D. Acheson to G. McGhee, 28 March 1951, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 10; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 29 March 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 292; D. Acheson to US Embassy London, 31 March 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 296; Memcon: DOS Officials and JCS, 2 May 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* pp. 113-19; and NSC Paper 107/2: "Statement of Policy on Iran" 27 June 1951, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 32 all illustrate American distress over British tactics.

³⁸ Wilkinson, *Tradition*, p. 292.

expedite their extractive opportunities by dealing with Buraimi sheikhs, instead of waiting for Said to bring those wayward rulers under his control.³⁹

Foreign Office authorities privately agreed with IPC observations on this issue, noting that Britain “has considered Buraimi sheikhs to possess *de facto* independence” from Muscati authority. British officials also supported IPC consolidation of concessionary agreements, since successful efforts here “place[d] barriers to encroachments of rival interests.”⁴⁰ Ultimately, however, the Foreign Office rejected IPC initiatives regarding *de jure* independence for Buraimi, apparently based on its fears that British interests might suffer if competitive bidding for backcountry concessions emerged. Local Saudi influence had, in fact, recently expanded significantly, as ambiguous frontiers enabled political activity to flourish. Combined ARAMCO-Saudi efforts to secure concessions now offered an appealing counterpoise to IPC.

Diplomatic Frustration at Dammam Compels Eastern Arabian Retrenchment

Prospects for amicable boundary resolution improved the following year. The Dammam Conference of January 1952 appeared to offer a legitimate opportunity to end festering Eastern Arabian territorial problems. In contrast to rather hit-and-miss communications marking this dispute’s earlier phases, high-level Saudi and British delegations now conducted direct talks on relatively ‘neutral’ ground—in Saudi territory, but near Bahrain, nexus of British regional administration.⁴¹ As before, the composition of the British delegation, particularly regarding certain Gulf clients in whose name

³⁹ R.E. Bird Memorandum, 27 November 1951, PRO FO 371/91294 EA10810/1.

⁴⁰ W.P. Cranston Minute, 4 December 1951; R.F.G. Sarell Memorandum, 8 December 1951, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Rupert Hay led Britain’s delegation; other members included Major C.J. Pelly, Political Agent at Kuwait, Michael Weir, Trucial Coast Political Officer, and W.V.R. Evans, FO Assistant Legal Advisor.

Britain negotiated—Abu Dhabi and Muscat—vexed London.⁴² Riyadh advocated their participation, but the Foreign Office had mixed emotions about including them.

On one hand, Britain wanted its clients to stand on their own feet; breaking long-established cycles of dependence could relieve strain on British finances, while ultimately promoting an accretion of strength along favourable lines. Yet if these clients actively negotiated, they might cut separate deals with Saudi Arabia, to British detriment.⁴³ In an ominous harbinger, Qatar had, in fact, recently moved in this direction. Britain had its own regional interests, objectives not entirely congruent with those of its client sheikhs, and possessed no guarantee that Abu Dhabi and Muscati rulers would defend those interests while negotiating with Saudi representatives, not least because British officials held a low view of these rulers' political and diplomatic abilities.⁴⁴ To fuse these disparate notions—a desire to move its clients away from direct vassalage, versus a fear that doing so might undercut British positions—the Foreign Office contemplated an option whereby Hay would engineer the sheikhs' absence from Dammam, and arrange for their replacement by relatives who were more “intelligent and useful” for British purposes.⁴⁵ This plan became irrelevant when Prince Faisal, Saudi Foreign Affairs Minister and second in the line of succession to the Saudi throne, announced he would lead Riyadh's team; given Faisal's stature, protocol dictated that Gulf rulers themselves—rather than their relatives, or British-appointed proxies—appear at Dammam.⁴⁶ They did not, however, participate directly in negotiations.

⁴² British Gulf clients also included Kuwait, Bahrain, and others, but the most contentious Anglo-Saudi disputes primarily involved Abu Dhabi and Muscat.

⁴³ B. Berry Memorandum, “Persian Gulf Boundary Problems,” 20 April 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 38; Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 86.

⁴⁴ PRPG to FO, 21 January 1952, PRO FO 371/98830 EA1081/15. A.D.M. Ross Minute, 9 February 1952, PRO FO 371/98830 EA1081/42 contains Ross' view that British Gulf clients were “not particularly effective in prosecuting their claims,” implying that Britain could prosecute those claims more effectively.

⁴⁵ PRPG to FO, 5 January 1952; W.P. Cranston Minute, 7 January 1952, PRO FO 371/98830 EA1081/2.

⁴⁶ Although only Sheikh Ali Al Thani of Qatar and Sheikh Shakhbut of Abu Dhabi attended. Sultan Said resisted all efforts to secure his attendance. See *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1466.

Establishing a negotiating strategy also posed problems. What Britain would concede for the purpose of ending this dispute had special importance. Having recently considered *de jure* independence at Buraimi, the Foreign Office also contemplated establishing a Neutral Zone, with Saudi and British oil interests sharing ‘fifty-fifty’ extraction rights. Three decades earlier, British negotiators orchestrated similar arrangements to settle potentially escalatory disputes along northern Saudi frontiers.⁴⁷ Just as London rejected independence for Buraimi, though, so too did British authorities now oppose this sort of Anglo-Saudi compromise, for fear of eroding those “barriers to encroachments of rival interests” London so valued. In this case, however, British authorities left final decisions with IPC.⁴⁸ If the company preferred an early settlement, the Foreign Office would sponsor a Neutral Zone compromise; if IPC favoured “indefinite [dispute] prolongation” to avoid sharing any of its regional claims, British negotiators would stand fast, resisting any cessions or compromise.⁴⁹ IPC chose the latter, thus setting into motion “indefinite prolongation” of the Eastern Arabian stand-off, catalysing a spiral of Anglo-Saudi hostility, culminating in direct armed conflict between these two nations.⁵⁰ IPC reluctance with respect to ‘Neutral Zone’ arrangements was due at least in part to its fear that opening an Eastern Arabian zone to concessionary bidding might increase the negotiating strength of Middle Eastern states vis-à-vis Western oil consortia in the struggle to control profits. Earlier episodes in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia vividly demonstrated this phenomenon.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Troeller, p. 181.

⁴⁸ PRPG to FO, 15 January 1952, PRO FO 371/98830 EA1081/12. Consistent with earlier Foreign Office assessments on this issue (Wilkinson, *Tradition*, p. 290), Hay and the Foreign Office both resisted any Neutral Zone compromise. They opposed ‘appeasing’ the Saudis, and thought such arrangements were not a long-term solution. Compromising also ended Saudi containment west of *Rub al-Khali*, the Arabian Peninsula’s ‘Empty Quarter.’

⁴⁹ FO Minute, 28 January 1952; W.P. Cranston Minute, 27 April 1952, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Undated FO Minute, *ibid.*

⁵¹ Yergin, pp. 437-42, Anderson, “Fifty-Fifty” p. 147, and Longrigg, pp. 214-15 analyse Kuwaiti-Saudi neutral zone concessionary arrangements and their impact on oil profit distribution.

Despite granting IPC significant responsibility for establishing British policy, the Foreign Office steadfastly sought to exclude any involvement at Dammam for American oil companies. ARAMCO legal assistance to Saudi Arabia especially irritated London. On this and other occasions, British officials specifically requested ARAMCO to cease cooperation with Riyadh, while exhorting Washington to restrain ARAMCO from pressing “extreme [Saudi] claims” in disputed areas. Consistent with its earlier posture, the Foreign Office intended to base negotiations on the Blue Line. Failing that, British negotiators planned to ‘fall back’ on the Riyadh Line, a demarcation Britain attempted, but failed, to get Ibn Saud to accept as a definitive Eastern Arabian frontier two decades earlier. Saudi Arabia, with ARAMCO help, proposed a line many miles east of the Blue and Riyadh Lines as more appropriate than either British suggestion, but for Britain such a boundary delineation was entirely unacceptable. Isolating Saudi representatives from ARAMCO legal support would weaken Riyadh’s negotiating stance, thereby shifting the negotiating basis to a demarcation British diplomats preferred. British officials also demanded to peruse ARAMCO boundary findings *in toto*, a contention company lawyers found absurd. Fearing an impression of partiality, American authorities refused to intervene with private financial interests such as ARAMCO, thus frustrating British designs.⁵²

The Dammam conference opened on 28 January 1952. British and Saudi envoys presented folios outlining their respective claims to Eastern Arabian disputed zones. Approximately one uneventful week after negotiations started, Hay requested an

⁵² P. Hart to DOS, 17 May 1950, USNA RG 59 886F.2553/5-1750; D. Acheson to US Embassy Jeddah, 18 January 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 280; W.P. Cranston Minute, 16 January 1952; FO to UK Embassy Washington, 17 January 1952, PRO FO 371/98830 EA1081/9; UK Embassy Washington to FO, 26 April 1952; FO Memorandum, 29 May 1952; FO to UK Embassy Washington, 3 June 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5; UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 17 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/18; D.M.H. Riches Memorandum, 11 October 1956, PRO FO 371/120782 ES1531/38; MWI; Brown, p. 209; Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 88.

adjournment, ostensibly due to King George VI's death, but also to give the Foreign Office an opportunity to discuss strategy and decide whether to continue discussions or suspend them indefinitely.⁵³ Saudi and British bargaining positions were nowhere near close enough to facilitate a quick settlement. Britain's team at Dammam anticipated officials in London should require only a few days to contemplate these decisions, but nearly a week later, Hay still lacked instructions from Whitehall. Hay's instinct correctly convinced him that the Foreign Office contemplated unilateral denunciation of the conference; he prepared his contingent for departure, warning Saudi officials of imminent suspension.⁵⁴

This long British delay troubled American diplomats in London, who earnestly hoped a solution would emerge from this summit, laying these disputes to rest and assuaging confrontation between Britain and Saudi Arabia. Lingering Anglo-Saudi hostility so threatened Western political and economic interests in the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf that diplomatic breakthroughs carried vital importance. When American officials suggested as much to their British counterparts, the latter blamed the deadlock on "inflexible Saudi demands," remarking that solutions would transpire *only* if Ibn Saud instructed his negotiators to make large concessions. As American envoys probed British intentions, inquiring specifically about British willingness to compromise, the Foreign Office indicated this was a mere possibility, and would occur only "within certain limits and at the right moment." Instead of making concessions at Dammam, British officials

⁵³ RHD, 7 February 1952. The previous day, Hay confided to his diary that possibilities for an acceptable settlement were "very faint." PRO FO 371/98830 discusses the King's death and its impact on Dammam.

⁵⁴ RHD, 13 February 1952. Reasons for these seemingly inexplicable Foreign Office delays are somewhat unclear; many documents in the relevant folders (such as PRO FO 371/98830 and 371/98831) remain closed. A.D.M. Ross to UK Embassy Washington, 3 June 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5 provides some insight, but several ambiguities persist. This author speculates that London preferred ceasing negotiations because Saudi Arabia was obviously uninterested in toeing the Blue or Riyadh Lines, but British officials balked at immediate adjournment because they anticipated poor responses from Washington and Riyadh. In the end, their concern for British interests trumped fears of adverse Saudi and American reactions to suspending negotiations.

preferred a different dispute-resolution mechanism: “impartial investigation,” perhaps international arbitration. The Foreign Office had in fact previously considered arbitration, examining that venue in detail in Summer 1950, but opted for direct negotiations. In late 1951, however, IPC suggested Britain re-evaluate arbitration, as a potential fall-back if Dammam collapsed. In light of its strong reservations about “risking submittal of [this] case to arbitration,” the Foreign Office hoped to avoid this recourse.⁵⁵ However, failure at Dammam necessitated at least a tentative British shift toward venues other than direct negotiations, including arbitration. Lingering Foreign Office unease about ‘judicial’ solutions meant British officials did not immediately reveal to Saudi Arabia their interest in convening arbitration.⁵⁶ Such notification emerged only after dramatic Eastern Arabian developments forced London to show its hand.

A week after Hay requested adjournment, London finally dispatched instructions to British negotiators, temporarily ending their involvement, and suspending Dammam for approximately one month (although Britain was not specific on this point), with a pre-Dammam status quo still in effect. Among other factors, British concerns over AIOC nationalisation—specifically, growing sentiments among Winston Churchill’s Cabinet that they should concede nothing to Mohammed Mossadegh—probably played a significant role in the Foreign Office decision to end Dammam.⁵⁷ The AIOC impasse meant non-Iranian petroleum sources—such as the Persian Gulf—now had additional importance for Britain. Early 1952 therefore proved a singularly inappropriate and

⁵⁵ W.P. Cranston Memoranda, 22 November 1952 & 28 December 1952, PRO FO 371/91292 EA1088/2.

⁵⁶ A.D.M. Ross Minute, 9 February 1952; FO Minute, 18 February 1952, PRO FO 371/98830 EA1081/42. These documents invalidate a common claim that Washington initiated the idea of arbitration, and forced it on Britain, which actually favoured other venues but complied with this proposal because of American pressure. (See, for instance, Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 126) In fact, the United States did not really care *how* British and Saudi leaders settled their differences, so long as they did so quickly, bilaterally and amicably. See Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 4 November 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1490.

⁵⁷ D. Acheson to DOS, 10 November 1951, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 129; UK Embassy Tehran to DOS, 2 January 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 140. Eden told Acheson, “Mossadegh’s seizure of AIOC properties was a serious blow but refining capacity can be built elsewhere.”

unsuitable time for London to cede any Eastern Arabian claims. These aborted proceedings, in fact, paradoxically increased Anglo-Saudi competition rather than lessening tension. Now that London possessed a full compilation of its opponent's territorial claims—something British officials had sought in vain since 1949—and arbitration appeared more and more likely, obtaining detailed assessments of strengths and weaknesses of British claims vis-à-vis newly-available Saudi documentation gained critical importance. To this end, the Foreign Office covertly dispatched Assistant Trucial Coast Political Officer Martin Buckmaster to reconnoitre disputed Eastern Arabian regions, providing Buckmaster a mandate to furnish such information.⁵⁸

Buckmaster's mission caused Anglo-Saudi controversy, as did indefinite suspension of Dammam. When Hay announced this suspension, arguments erupted between opposing delegates. Unilateral and open-ended adjournment upset Faisal and other Saudi negotiators, who hoped to continue boundary discussions.⁵⁹ American diplomats in Jeddah shared Saudi solicitude. Ambassador Raymond Hare attributed British adjournment to poor Foreign Office preparation, and a generally weak case. By suspending talks London bought time to strengthen its position, he thought.⁶⁰ The British

⁵⁸ FO Memorandum, 7 April 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/2; R.F.G. Sarell Minute, 1 May 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/4; US Embassy London to DOS, 12 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1474. When Saudi leaders learned of Buckmaster's mission, considerable controversy ensued. They suspected his journey secretly sought to reinforce British positions while undercutting their own, and protested to British diplomats at Jeddah, arguing that Buckmaster's activities violated the 1951 'Standstill Agreement' prohibiting political and military activity in disputed areas. Britain countered by describing his trip as a standard administrative visit, therefore placing it outside 'Standstill Agreement' jurisdiction. Saudi Arabia rejected this explanation, which was one reason Turki bin Ataishan traveled to Buraimi in mid-summer, 1952, pushing these disputes to new levels of intensity. See US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 14 May 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1473 and Memcon: R. Bailey and P. Hart, 26 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1499.

⁵⁹ RHD, 14 February 1952; PRPG to FO, 15 February 1952, PRO FO 371/98830 EA1081/42.

⁶⁰ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 24 February 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1466; UK Embassy Washington to FO, 26 April 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5. The Foreign Office dismissed Hare's appraisal; see FO to UK Embassy Washington, 3 June 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5. US Embassy London to DOS, 31 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1509 has more information regarding British reasons for abandoning Dammam. See also Wilkinson, *Frontiers*, p. xxii.

Ambassador in Jeddah privately shared American opinions regarding *de facto* Saudi political supremacy along various disputed frontiers vis-à-vis Britain and its clients.⁶¹

Following adjournment, Hare talked at length with Ibn Saud, whose suspicions had increased after the diplomatic collapse at Dammam. British activities along the Hashemite-Gulf Arch caused him deep concern. Recent tribal incidents along Iraqi-Saudi boundaries troubled the King; he sensed British intrigue had incited such machinations to shift regional political alignments against Saudi Arabia. Ibn Saud also deplored apparent British sponsorship of closer Iraqi-Kuwaiti ties, and support for 'Fertile Crescent' unification of Syria with the Hashemite Monarchies. Iraq had recently undertaken several political and military initiatives, seeking to annex Syria, including, as outlined above, serious contemplation in 1949 of an attack against that country to attain Hashemite 'Fertile Crescent' aspirations. Although unsuccessful in this quest as of early 1952, Baghdad had not abandoned its programme for 'Greater Hashem.' Riyadh suspected Iraqi military manoeuvres against Syria might prefigure subsequent attacks on Saudi Arabia. Jordanian leaders likewise sought federation with their northern neighbour. Contrary to Saudi belief, Britain opposed an Iraqi-Kuwaiti federation—although Baghdad desired such an arrangement—and had opposed Iraq's 1949 bid to annex Syria. London's role in tribal incidents along Iraqi-Saudi boundaries is impossible to ascertain with any accuracy.⁶² British officials also attempted to form a Council of Trucial Coast Sheikhs; whether Whitehall explicitly directed this organisation at Saudi Arabia is unknown.⁶³

⁶¹ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 9 April 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/3.

⁶² R.F.G. Sarell Minute, 1 May 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/4 discusses a "secret report" outlining Iraqi interest in spreading its influence southward. Unfortunately, this report is unavailable. Ibn Saud's fears regarding possible Kuwaiti-Iraqi union apparently stemmed from the Emir of Kuwait's recent visit to Iraq. His disquiet over re-emergence of British-sponsored Fertile Crescent schemes under Hashemite domination sprang from these Iraqi-Kuwaiti dalliances, and as well perhaps from a Foreign Office dispatch in late 1951, in which London gave approval for full-scale Iraqi involvement in Persian Gulf political and military affairs. Britain denied that such arrangements were in any way inimical to Saudi Arabia, however. See UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 15 April 1952; FO Minute, 29 April 1952; FO to UK Embassy Jeddah, 8 May 1952; FO Memorandum, 11 June 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/4; Wilkinson, *Frontiers*, p. 235;

The emptiness in his complaints over British intrigue notwithstanding, Ibn Saud wanted American diplomats to advise Whitehall to re-open boundary negotiations, and abandon efforts at subverting Saudi positions. Ibn Saud resurrected his earlier idea of an Anglo-Saudi ‘fact-finding commission’, suggesting Washington supervise this organisation if British leaders failed to negotiate immediately, formally, and in good faith. According to the King’s conception, this commission, after investigating political and legal issues at Buraimi, would apportion boundaries. Since British officials also apparently preferred an “impartial investigation,” a compromise seemed possible. But serious conceptual differences foreclosed any immediate breakthrough. Hare informed Ibn Saud of American preferences for strict impartiality. A ‘fact-finding commission’ subject to United States oversight failed to meet this criterion, thereby precluding American participation. Hare confided to Washington that Saudi concerns were probably overblown, although some misgivings had merit. He suggested a “frank exchange of [Anglo-American] views,” and hoped State Department influence could persuade British leaders to renew negotiations without undue delay.⁶⁴

American diplomats in London disagreed with Hare’s recommendations, but Acheson saw value in them. That Dammam had collapsed frustrated him. He feared Eastern Arabian boundary problems had become an “emotional cause celebre injurious to Britain,” and emphasised to Foreign Office authorities that persistent delays in settling such controversies would hurt, not help, Britain’s Persian Gulf edifice, to the detriment of

Maddy-Weitzman, pp. 80-81; Burrows, p. 96; Silverfarb, *Twilight*, pp. 206-9. For details on Jordanian ambitions vis-à-vis Syrian territory and Hashemite Union in the early 1950s, and Saudi unease regarding these desiderata, see McGhee, *Envoy*, pp. 358-59, Satloff, pp. 33-4, and Memcon: G. McGhee and Ibn Saud, 8 May 1950, GMP, Box 2.

⁶³ US Embassy London to DOS, 13 May 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1472; UK Embassy Washington to FO, 26 April 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5. British officials established the Trucial Coast Council soon after Dammam collapsed. By 1953, formalising a ‘Trucial Federation’ to tighten economic, political, and military links between British Gulf clients constituted Britain’s “ultimate goal” regarding Gulf strategy; see Burrows, pp. 24-25, 33. AAI suggests by federating these clients Whitehall sought to facilitate their “thinking collectively,” rather than in terms of narrow self-interest.

all Free World Middle Eastern positions. He thought “time was running out”; further dilatory tactics might cause serious estrangement between Saudi Arabia and Britain. Apparently he feared lingering Saudi hostility over boundary issues could merge with larger anti-Western trends in the Arab world, thereby threatening regional Anglo-American strategic and economic interests. His apprehension regarding United Nations participation in ongoing Eastern Arabian quarrels caused additional concern; Moscow could use this participation for “polit[ical] propaganda.” Acheson wanted immediate initiation of Anglo-Saudi talks, perhaps by re-opening the Dammam conference. Although arbitration was better than nothing—and far superior to American mediation—he preferred direct negotiations, based on their potential brevity.⁶⁵ Accordingly, American diplomats articulated this message to British officials in early April 1952. Acheson also implored Riyadh to compromise, and meet Britain approximately halfway, without expecting purely one-sided concessions. Moreover, he dismissed any notion that Britain connived for anti-Saudi coalitions, and condemned Saudi paranoia, since over-suspicion forestalled any prospect for negotiated settlement.⁶⁶

Acheson’s excuses failed. As spring yielded to summer, London did not resume talks with Saudi Arabia. Foreign Secretary Eden, who equated Saudi ambitions with those of the Third Reich, found American attitudes “disturbing,” thought Washington preferred Saudi interests to British, and dismissed Acheson’s suggestions as unconstructive and impractical. Similarly, his Foreign Office subordinates opposed reinitiating Anglo-Saudi negotiations since “further discussions will make little progress.” A diplomatic breakthrough was only possible if Saudi Arabia offered major

⁶⁴ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 10 March 1952, *FRUS 1952-52 IX* no. 1467. See also note 70 *infra*.

⁶⁵ US Embassy London to DOS, 14 March 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1468; DOS to US Embassy London, 24 March 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1469.

⁶⁶ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 24 March 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1470.

concessions, such as abandoning all Eastern Arabian territorial claims. Even if Britain opted for negotiations, any resumption was six or more months distant, they decided.⁶⁷

After all, this status quo favoured London. Britain and its clients possessed the key terrain, while the impasse kept Saudi Arabia firmly at bay. British oil companies could survey lucrative Eastern Arabian petroleum deposits without distraction or fear regarding rival oil companies. The Foreign Office therefore had little incentive to expedite a solution.⁶⁸ In post-Dammam discussions with American diplomats, British officials attributed their slow pace to summer heat; sultry Gulf weather rendered negotiations nearly impossible, they suggested. Furthermore, the Foreign Office asserted “Saudi intransigence” constituted the foremost obstacle to pacific boundary settlement. When Hare suggested a frontier *modus vivendi* might soothe broader Saudi insecurities, British officials responded that Washington could mollify Riyadh’s angst by informing Ibn Saud that his fears had no basis.⁶⁹

These officials also disparaged Hare’s other suggestions regarding Eastern Arabian political destinies. For instance, he envisioned a loose union of coastal sheikhdoms, with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, or another nearby power acting as regional hegemon. London opposed such notions, since they threatened British prerogatives and the Hashemite-Gulf Arch; only outcomes in which Britain “remain[ed] the Persian Gulf Protecting Power” were acceptable. Not only did British officials dislike these suggestions, they also resented Hare’s audacity in offering them in the first place. At all costs the Foreign Office wanted Washington to abandon direct “interfere[nce] in Persian Gulf political planning, [and] participation with us in control[ling] affairs there.” Since

⁶⁷ FO Memorandum, 7 April 1952; A. Eden Minute, 7 June 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/2. This memorandum contains a copy of the State Department aide-memoire which had Acheson’s comments as its basis; Eden provided extensive marginalia. Burrows, p. 104 also discusses Eden’s low opinion of Saudi Arabia.

⁶⁸ FO to UK Embassy Washington, 3 June 1952, PRO FO 371/98829 ES1051/5.

the Gulf lay firmly in Britain's sphere, intrusive American 'meddling' was unwelcome, particularly because the Foreign Office thought Washington sought consolidation of Saudi political power over British clients.⁷⁰ London also rejected Ibn Saud's suggestion for a joint 'fact-finding commission', on the grounds that Saudi representation on an inquiry at Buraimi would "intimidate" local inhabitants.⁷¹

Despite earnest British hopes for cessation of American 'meddling' in what Britain considered to be its exclusive sphere, such involvement intensified. Circumventing State Department participation may have been possible, although Foreign Office pursuit of mutually exclusive policies—wherein Britain displayed reluctance to engage in boundary talks while seeking to keep the United States at a distance—foreclosed this outcome. The level of American involvement had an inverse relation to negotiating progress. Summer 1952's serious impasse regarding diplomatic stalemate insured active State Department inclusion. Britain could have reduced these roles by re-opening the stalled Dammam conference, but, as noted above, the Foreign Office had little interest in further talks. Therefore, British officials soon adopted other tactics. First, they tried to convince Washington of Ibn Saud's overall unimportance, asserting Saudi status as a Middle Eastern "broken reed" meant the United States could abandon Riyadh without suffering any real consequences.⁷²

Predictably, this ploy failed; State Department officials did not renounce Saudi-American ties and in fact pressured Britain to develop "new [boundary resolution] ideas."⁷³ The Foreign Office eventually accepted the reality of American involvement.

⁶⁹ US Embassy London to DOS, 4 April 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1471.

⁷⁰ FO Minute, 29 April 1952; W. Strang Minute, 2 May 1952; R. Makins Minute, 5 May 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/4; FO Memorandum, 29 May 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5; W. Strang Minute, 24 March 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 383; Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 87.

⁷¹ US Embassy London to DOS, 13 May 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1472.

⁷² UK Embassy Washington to FO, 26 April 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5.

⁷³ US Embassy London to DOS, 13 May 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1472.

Channeling United States participation in favourable directions formed its new challenge. In these circumstances, garnering unambiguous American support for British positions constituted an ideal option. Possible State Department intervention with ARAMCO caused particular Foreign Office enthusiasm. Just as they sought to sever Saudi-ARAMCO collaboration immediately prior to Dammam, they once again tried to interpose a wedge between Saudi boundary claims and oil-financed legal support, thus enhancing British negotiating strength immeasurably. In the Eastern Department, A.D.M. Ross preferred “hammer[ing] away” until American officials relented, and abandoned their long-standing neutrality. He suggested British officials stress the impossibility of impartiality in Middle Eastern politics; ‘neutrality’ represented mere “prostrate appeasement” of Saudi Arabia, meaning Washington had actually aligned against Britain.⁷⁴

This bid for full American support failed. British authorities therefore shifted gears yet again, concluding not only that United States Gulf involvement had become a reality, but also that Washington would never fall blindly into line behind British policies. Only frank Anglo-American discussions remained as an alternative.⁷⁵ Radical and unforeseen changes along disputed frontiers, however, undercut this new cooperative policy, which soon yielded to Britain’s earlier ‘no middle ground’ paradigm for dealing with the United States.⁷⁶

Raising Stakes in Eastern Arabia: Turki Enters Buraimi

In August, Saudi Arabia concluded negotiating delays might continue indefinitely—Dammam remained in suspension—and Britain secretly exploited this

⁷⁴ A.D.M. Ross Minute, 30 May 1952; A.D.M. Ross to UK Embassy Washington, 3 June 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5.

⁷⁵ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 12 June 1952; FO Minute, 23 June 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/12.

impasse by consolidating its grip on disputed areas, through covert political activity.⁷⁷

Late that month, therefore, Ibn Saud dispatched Emir Turki bin Ataishan (alternatively spelled Utaishan) and a few dozen others to Buraimi, on a pretext that Rashid bin Hamid and his followers in the Al Bu Shams tribe at the oasis requested Saudi intervention against British intimidation.⁷⁸ Turki and most of his entourage were Saudi nationals. Initial British reports—that large detachments of Saudi troops had overrun the entire oasis—turned out to be somewhat overstated, although updated assessments did not prevent Britain from strongly protesting to the Saudi government.⁷⁹ Rather than attacking Buraimi indiscriminately, Turki and his men had traveled to villages sympathetic to Saudi Arabia, encamped there among pro-Saudi tribesmen, and soon established a base of operations at Hamasa, a village in central Buraimi.

⁷⁶ FO Minute, 13 September 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/15. Britain's 'cooperative policy' lasted approximately three months.

⁷⁷ A visit by Trucial Coast Political Officer John Wilton and his military escort to Buraimi in late spring 1952 agitated Saudi officials so much that they filed formal diplomatic protests, charging London with a direct 'Standstill Agreement' violation. Britain contended that Wilton was conducting a desert locust control mission (Memcon: P. Hart and B. Burrows, 30 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1480), while Wilkinson, *Tradition*, p. 294 concludes that Wilton sought tribal support for British oil concessions in western Oman and other disputed areas.

⁷⁸ Memcon: D. Acheson and Prince Faisal, 2 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1493; Henderson, p. 155. Ashton, *Problem*, p. 75 and Lacey, p. 293, contend, without citing any direct evidence, that American oil executives pressed Ibn Saud to send Turki into Buraimi so that ARAMCO could expand its concessions. Lacey also remarks, again without evidence, that Turki and his men "rode in ARAMCO trucks [and] used ARAMCO supplies." Mosely, *Dulles*, pp. 348-49 has been the wellspring of many wild tales regarding CIA involvement in Eastern Arabia, asserting that "Kim Roosevelt was assigned the task of arranging the annexation [of Buraimi]...he filtered Saudi troops, transported in ARAMCO trucks, into the oasis, offered Saudi citizenship to the inhabitants, and offered an air-conditioned Cadillac to the local sheikh if he would acknowledge Saudi sovereignty. British-led Omani Scouts drove out the Saudis." In addition to serious chronological confusion (he incorrectly dates the Saudi expulsion as taking place *before* boundary arbitration occurred in Geneva in 1955), Mosely's account suffers from rather thin evidentiary support. He cites "his own researches in the Persian Gulf and at the Foreign Office Library," (p. 513) without providing any additional details. Perhaps as a result of this pervasive ambiguity, Scott Lucas, a foremost expert on 1950s Middle Eastern historiography, notes that Mosely's evidence is in general "very suspect, and should not be accepted without corroboration" (S. Lucas, *Roar*, p. 129). However, Ovendale, *Origins*, p. 154, Dorril, p. 608, and Ranelagh, p. 298 follow Mosely's lead, branding the CIA as *agent provocateur* urging Ibn Saud onward (without citing any direct evidence). Trucial Coast Political Officer Michael Weir—in my opinion a more authoritative source than Mosely's nebulous "researches"—asserted in a personal interview that, to his knowledge, British officials "never had the slightest whiff of American intelligence activity in Eastern Arabia."

⁷⁹ US Embassy London to DOS, 12 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1474.

If Ibn Saud sought to end the six-month hiatus on boundary talks, he succeeded magnificently.⁸⁰ Within two weeks of Turki's mission, British officials informed Washington of their willingness to begin discussions, stipulating, however, that the next negotiating round remained months, not weeks or days, distant. Moreover, they failed to inform Saudi Arabia of this policy change. Resumption of negotiations was now also contingent on Saudi withdrawal from disputed areas.

In subsequent conversations with their American counterparts, Foreign Office representatives expressed optimism about a seemingly new negotiating tactic that promised to break the impasse, while retaining British commercial imperatives: territorial settlements *would not involve* modifications in traditional tribal alignments. In other words, London hoped to broker a compromise whereby Britain (through its clients) controlled the actual land in the disputed areas, while Riyadh retained the loyalty of local 'hearts and minds.'⁸¹ Since, for Britain, regional oil deposits had unquestioned priority over abstract notions of individual allegiance, this bargain—which merely rehashed a deal London unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate in 1935—met British strategic objectives.⁸²

Britain's newfound willingness to negotiate did not mean Whitehall intended quiet acquiescence in Saudi gambits at Buraimi. British authorities, while privately conceding Riyadh "has won the first round handsomely," nevertheless understood the magnitude of this confrontation. Even if Britain confined Saudi influence to *inland* areas of Eastern Arabia—which in itself seemed less and less likely now that Turki had

⁸⁰ British Ministers thought that Saudi "desire for oil concessions," rather than interest in resuming negotiations, motivated Ibn Saud to dispatch Turki to Buraimi; PRO CAB 128 (52) 81st Conclusions, 26 September 1952.

⁸¹ US Embassy London to DOS, 4 September and 12 September 1952; Memcon: P. Hart and B. Burrows, 30 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1480. British assumptions on these occasions—that Ibn Saud would yield regarding oil concessions—contradict Cabinet Conclusions of 26 September 1952.

⁸² Leatherwood, p. 235 outlines 1935 British proposals for a 'double frontier', i.e., a demarcation giving Ibn Saud 'personal' and 'tribal'—but not territorial—Eastern Arabian authority.

established himself at Buraimi—IPC might “lose highly important areas covered by [their] concessions.”⁸³ The Foreign Office therefore embarked on a three-part campaign to contain Saudi influence in the immediate wake of Turki’s arrival. One phase entailed a request for United States support. In conversations with their United States counterparts, British diplomats branded Saudi policies as “imperialism, that’s what, imperialism,” hoping American diplomatic ‘persuasion’ in Riyadh might limit Turki’s freedom of action. A second phase involved more tangible efforts, including dispatch of British forces via Land Rovers to Buraimi in late September, coupled with an aero-psychological campaign in which Royal Air Force planes from bases at Sharjah dropped leaflets throughout Buraimi, informing Turki and his men to leave immediately.⁸⁴ If this initiative failed to compel enemy detachments into unconditional departure, additional British, Muscati, and Trucial Coast troops were to advance into forward positions, particularly frontier forts along Buraimi’s periphery. The final phase of this campaign involved diplomatic pressure against Saudi Arabia. British diplomats traveled to Riyadh, and warned Ibn Saud of their government’s intent to “take steps it deems essential to protect its position” if he did not pledge Turki’s withdrawal. The King immediately rejected this ultimatum, and threatened a United Nations appeal if Britain resorted to force.⁸⁵

Phase one of British planning failed because Washington did not respond quite as London had hoped. The United States government opposed Turki’s trip to Buraimi. Acheson considered the foray to be escalatory, predicting a legacy of heightened tension rather than a spirit of amicability necessary for fruitful discussions. In no uncertain terms, Acheson informed Saudi authorities of his disappointment, but he also objected to British

⁸³ FO Memorandum, 16 October 1952, PRO FO 371/98377 EA1084/259.

⁸⁴ PRO CAB 128 (52) 81st Conclusions, 26 September 1952; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 28 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1488. Mann, p. 35 says British forces traveling to Buraimi numbered 37 men.

tactics in this growing crisis.⁸⁶ In his estimation, ultimatums, threats to use force, and provocative low-level flights only compounded an already grave situation, causing further Anglo-Saudi deterioration. Acheson, assuming Ibn Saud preferred negotiations to military confrontation if the former course became available, espoused a straightforward solution: London should cease all military manoeuvres, preparations, and deployments immediately, and inform Riyadh of its willingness to revive Dammam straightforwardly. Acheson vigorously pursued this action but failed to receive straight answers. Torn between American pressure and their own desire to avoid negotiations until Riyadh met certain conditions, British officials seemed unable to decide on the proper timing for resuming talks with Saudi negotiators.⁸⁷ In tandem with his suggestions for ending British military preparations, Acheson also wanted the antagonists to halt ongoing and steady reinforcement of their respective positions in and around Buraimi.⁸⁸

Although these suggestions for mutual Anglo-Saudi restraint at Buraimi enjoyed unambiguous State Department support, controversy soon erupted over reports that Saudi Arabia now sought formal American mediation of the boundary deadlock. Ambassador Hare thought such mediation was undesirable though necessary; United States diplomats in London steadfastly opposed any American participation. Acheson balanced uneasily between these extremes, although at heart he opposed a direct role for the United States. He sincerely sought to maintain Washington's status as a disinterested 'honest broker'

⁸⁵ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 20 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1477; DOS Memorandum, 18 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1475; PRO CAB 128 (52) 84th Conclusions, 7 October 1952; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 28 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1478.

⁸⁶ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 19 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1476.

⁸⁷ Memcon: D. Bruce, O. Franks, and B. Burrows, 6 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1482 highlights British indecision. Oliver Franks, British Ambassador in Washington, and Burrows, his subordinate at the Embassy, debated strategy in American Undersecretary of State David Bruce's presence. Neither seemed to know the current state of affairs.

⁸⁸ Memcon: P. Hart and B. Burrows, 30 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1480. Burrows, p. 97, says Saudi leaders originated the idea for a 'standstill' in Saudi and British reinforcement, as they feared an imminent British attack. Evidence seems to indicate Washington in fact developed this concept. Ibn Saud concerned himself more with securing American support for Saudi positions than negotiating a 'standstill'.

which worked to bring the opposing parties together, but did not influence the settlement.⁸⁹ Therefore, when Ibn Saud sought direct American involvement in early October, Acheson demurred.⁹⁰ The King later modified his request, asking both London and Washington to participate in a tripartite boundary commission. Saudi leaders suggested such a commission could solve the impasse by conducting plebiscites at Buraimi.⁹¹ Acheson, who advocated direct Anglo-Saudi negotiations as the optimal solution, rejected this overture on the grounds that quasi-democratic solutions might result in unfair settlements, while damaging Anglo-American relations by giving an appearance that Washington had sided with Riyadh. Ibn Saud took cold comfort from this rejection, since Britain retained all initiative and could continue stalling indefinitely, although on occasion he, too, dragged his feet while Acheson tried desperately to revive Dammam.⁹² The State Department postulated that Saudi delaying tactics sought to convince Washington a tripartite commission offered the only real hope for timely resolution.

Tensions ratcheted upward in early October when rumours began swirling that a Saudi column consisting of hundreds of soldiers and dozens of vehicles stood ready to blast its way into Eastern Arabia, crossing the Liwa Oasis and continuing to Buraimi, in an effort to reinforce Turki while undercutting British efforts to sever Saudi supply lines.⁹³ Meanwhile, Sultan Said of Muscat assembled forces for a possible move of his

⁸⁹ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 25 September 1952; Embassy London to DOS, 26 September 1952; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 28 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1478; Memcon: P. Hart and B. Burrows, 30 September 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1480.

⁹⁰ The King's requests came on 5 and 9 October 1952; he also threatened a United Nations appeal if Washington did not intervene immediately. See US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 6 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1481; DOS to US Embassy London, 10 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1484; Memcon: R. Bailey and P. Hart, 26 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1499.

⁹¹ Ibn Saud to DOS, 26 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1488n.

⁹² DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 1 November 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1489; DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 11 November 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1491.

⁹³ DOS to US Consulate Dhahran, 8 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1483; DOS to US Embassy London, 10 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1484.

own along disputed frontiers.⁹⁴ Sultan Said asserted that the Imam of Oman had requested assistance against Saudi aggression, thus prompting his military build-up; despite the parlous relationship between Sultan and Imam, apparently the spectre of a common enemy temporarily bridged their differences.⁹⁵ London did not oppose Said's concentration of force, but ordered him to refrain from an outright attack on Turki.⁹⁶ This decision by Churchill's Cabinet to restrain the Sultan left British oil companies furious; they hoped for an overwhelming attack on Saudi forces, which would in turn re-open paths to potentially petroleum-rich areas in Oman's interior.⁹⁷ Whitehall-oil company divergence over Buraimi tactics marks one of the very few times London failed to implement IPC policy recommendations.

This cautious governmental stance probably sprang from several factors, including a lack of military intelligence regarding the number, quality, and disposition of Saudi troops and their tribal allies.⁹⁸ Initiating open conflict against an adversary of unknown size and strength posed unacceptable risk at that point—Autumn 1952—in light of broader British regional challenges, such as negotiating a treaty with Cairo transferring the Canal Zone to Egyptian control, and continued confrontation with Mossadegh.⁹⁹ After all, British clients had suffered a stinging rebuff at Buraimi in early 1949, and possible

⁹⁴ PRO CAB 128 (52) 84th Conclusions, 7 October 1952.

⁹⁵ Memcon: D. Bruce, O. Franks, and B. Burrows, 6 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1482. This apparent coincidence of interests between Imam and Sultan regarding Saudi activities did not encompass everyone under Imamate authority, however; several of his followers traveled to Riyadh in late 1952 and requested direct Saudi support.

⁹⁶ After some delay, Muscat accepted British restrictions. See US Consulate Dhahran to DOS, 14 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1485; RHD, 14 November 1952; Lord Salisbury to DOS, 27 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1530; Burrows, pp. 97-98.

⁹⁷ Innes, p. 21. Innes was Muscati Minister for External Affairs, 1953-58.

⁹⁸ RAF reconnaissance sorties over Saudi-occupied territory essentially ended in early October, although in response to anticipated Saudi reinforcement of Turki, the Foreign Office considered reviving these flights, and perhaps even expanding them into undisputed Saudi airspace. The State Department strongly opposed such missions, since they appeared provocative and escalatory. London complied with American suggestions, keeping Britain 'in the dark' about Saudi troop levels at Buraimi. See DOS to US Dhahran Consulate, 8 October 1952; US Embassy London to DOS, 9 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1483; DOS to US Embassy London, 10 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1484.

⁹⁹ Burrows, p. 98.

repetition of this humiliation carried ominous consequences for British strategic prerogatives. Some sources suggest Foreign Office interest in forestalling further deterioration in Anglo-American relations also influenced mid-October British caution.¹⁰⁰

Although Acheson knew of London's non-aggression mandate to Sultan Said, from his perspective an escalating spiral of violence still seemed a real possibility. He therefore redoubled efforts to secure a 'standstill agreement' limiting forces at Buraimi to minimal levels and theoretically reducing the danger of direct Anglo-Saudi conflict. Since the Foreign Office had concluded open fighting did not serve British interests, it favoured such arrangements, and cancelled a series of military manoeuvres, including provocative Royal Air Force sorties, in hopes of halting escalation at Buraimi. To induce Saudi compliance, British officials warned boundary negotiations would only resume if Riyadh agreed to mutual prohibition on reinforcing Buraimi, although the United States did not back this notion of a sequential *quid pro quo*. In principle Washington preferred concurrent initiation of talks and a force moratorium, even if simultaneity was rather impractical in this instance. In addition to issues of timing, London and Washington disagreed on optimal methods for future resolution of Eastern Arabian boundary controversies. British officials had little interest in direct talks and favoured arbitration; American officials thought timetables for arbitration left much to be desired, suggesting face-to-face Anglo-Saudi negotiations a la Dammam might yield greater expediency. Although the United States and Britain did not resolve all aspects of their ongoing debate, British authorities signed the standstill agreement on October 23rd, 1952. Within a matter of weeks, after securing Cabinet approval, Eden proposed formal arbitration to Saudi Arabia. Given the British clients' lack of influence or authority in many disputed regions, the Foreign Office knew arbitration represented a "leap in the dark." However, other

¹⁰⁰ I. Lucas, p. 42; MWI.

courses of action, such as “increased tribal money subsidies” were non-starters in themselves, since Whitehall knew Saudi Arabia would win engagements on those terms.¹⁰¹

Ibn Saud reluctantly agreed to participate in standstill arrangements, but only after the State Department flatly rejected his updated proposals for direct American participation in settling hostilities at Buraimi. The King’s trepidation was apparently due in part to his mistrust of British officials, particularly the depth of their commitment to resuming bilateral talks. He feared conclusion of an agreement limiting forces at Buraimi might merely signal a return to the *status quo ante*, in which London dominated these disputed zones, and prospects for meaningful negotiations seemed dim. He also advocated a wider swath for the standstill agreement, covering a broad zone of disputed areas, rather than merely Buraimi’s immediate environs. Washington discounted Ibn Saud’s concerns, urging that he agree to a mutual and immediate halt in military deployments to the oasis.¹⁰² In the end, he relented, accepting the agreement three days after Britain had done so, although he clung to adjudication through plebiscite, instead of arbitration, as his preferred solution.¹⁰³

Although success proved ephemeral, the late-October ‘Standstill Agreement’ appeared to mark a triumph for American diplomacy. This moratorium did in fact provide an opportunity for United States officials to assess the odds of long-term Eastern Arabian

¹⁰¹ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 7 October 1952; US Embassy London to DOS, 9 October 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1483; US Consulate Dhahran to DOS, 14 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1485; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 28 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1488; US Embassy London to DOS, 22 October 1952, DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 1 November 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1489; Brown, p. 208. American officials did not *oppose* arbitration; they just wanted direct Anglo-Saudi talks first. RHD, 23 October 1952, attests to growing Anglo-American friction resulting from Washington’s attempts to work out standstill arrangements. Innes, p. 22 erroneously states that in Autumn 1952, Britain faced “[American] pressure to submit the [Buraimi] case to arbitration.” PRO CAB 129 (52) CP 383, 4 November 1952 contains Eden’s Cabinet suggestion that Britain proceed to arbitration. He based his report in large part on D. Greenhill Memorandum, 27 October 1952, PRO FO 371/98377 EA1084/269.

¹⁰² DOS to US Embassy London, 18 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1487; UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 24 October 1952, PRO FO 371/98377 EA1084/248.

peace. Ambassador Hare used the short hiatus to pontificate on fundamental elements of Anglo-Saudi hostility: Why were London and Riyadh fighting at all? What did each state really want? Hare also attempted to interpret conflicting Anglo-Saudi proposals in a way that would remove Washington from an unenviable position betwixt its two quarrelling allies. Much to his own chagrin, the Ambassador concluded such efforts at extrication were probably futile, although he explicitly rejected oft-repeated Saudi calls for American mediation. Britain and Saudi Arabia had both conducted extremely self-serving policies, he thought, and attempted to manipulate American policy to suit those ends. Regarding boundary disputes *per se*, Hare thought both countries had significant strengths and weaknesses in their arguments, and, adding to the complexity, Riyadh and London approached these disputes from such wildly varying paradigms that common ground seemed beyond reach. Some sort of breakthrough transcending existing differences while offering a solution with which both sides could live represented the best for which Washington could hope.¹⁰⁴

Max Bishop, American Consul General at Dhahran, also probed the complex tangle of Eastern Arabian political and legal issues, hoping to ascertain regional trends and thereby clarify United States policy. Immediately after late-October cease-fire arrangements, he visited several British Gulf clients. Unlike Hare, Bishop reached some unambiguous conclusions. He thought British attempts to maintain Eastern Arabian hegemony would ultimately be in vain. In his estimation, these sheikhdoms favoured expanding ties with Saudi Arabia, not Britain.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 26 October 1952, PRO FO 371/98377 EA1084/251. PRO FO 371/98377 EA1084/252 has the Standstill Agreement's full text.

¹⁰⁴ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 4 November and 18 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* nos. 1490 and 1497. Hare's lengthy excurses illustrate American bewilderment and exasperation at this point.

¹⁰⁵ US Consulate Dhahran to DOS, 1 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1492.

The Foreign Office engaged in a little soul-searching of its own after consummating the Buraimi moratorium. Some British officials questioned the wisdom of continued confrontation with Ibn Saud, particularly in light of obvious expansion in Saudi political, economic, and military strength. Instead of allowing disputes to fester, Britain should offer some mutually acceptable compromise and use positive incentives—such as increased diplomatic and trade ties—as its primary tool for influencing Saudi behaviour, these officials thought. Adversarial relationships over the long-run could only hurt British interests.¹⁰⁶

Commensurate with Foreign Office assessments that arbitration represented a “leap in the dark,” Ambassador Pelham at Jeddah privately questioned the strength of British clients’ territorial claims, vis-à-vis Saudi assertions. Of the disputants’ cases, he regarded Saudi Arabia’s as potentially the strongest. His conclusions on this point did not prevent him from excoriating American policy, however. He thought Washington aimed at “building its own...[Middle Eastern] empire,” and resented consistent American disregard of British positions there. He viewed with suspicion the growing coincidence of Saudi-American interests, since this congruence drove the United States to establish a presence throughout Saudi Arabia, intruding even in such areas as Hejaz, the slice of Saudi territory along the Red Sea. Possibly because of Hejazi proximity to Egypt and the Suez Canal—areas of traditional British power—and status as ancestral Hashemite homeland, Pelham thought this region lay exclusively in a sphere of British influence. In London, these comments resonated. Foreign Office opinions nearly unanimously favoured strong opposition to Saudi boundary claims, even if resistant policies carried a

¹⁰⁶ D. Greenhill Memorandum: “Relations with Saudi Arabia,” 11 November 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/17; FO Memorandum, 11 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98385 EA1084/446; D. Greenhill Minute, 9 January 1953, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/18. Although Greenhill wanted to mollify Riyadh, he deplored staggering American naivete, such as a prevalent belief that “their war of independence...gives them permanent and welcome entrée to the confidence and friendship of smaller powers.”

price of American disappointment and frustration. Harmonised Anglo-American policy would result only if Washington “recognised the justice of our sheikhs’ claims and our right to resist Saudi encroachment”; if the State Department rejected this proposition, coordinated partnership with the United States could not succeed.¹⁰⁷

While these efforts at assessing various aspects of Eastern Arabian controversies transpired, the Standstill Agreement’s illusory nature became apparent. Neither British nor Saudis stood still in and around Buraimi.¹⁰⁸ Apparent breaches of varying magnitude occurred daily, ranging from British ‘no-fly-zone’ transgressions to Turki’s refusal to strike Saudi colours, which he had displayed at his headquarters since arriving two months earlier.¹⁰⁹ On a more serious level, Turki continued to fortify his position, orchestrating contacts with local authorities and establishing several strongpoints capable of logistical and communications support for Saudi operations. Riyadh apparently considered building on its success at Buraimi by sending another Saudi detachment across disputed frontiers, this time into the Liwa Oasis, a hundred miles southwest of Buraimi.¹¹⁰

London covertly dispatched Michael Weir and other British political officers to reconnoitre the political and military situation at Buraimi, in knowing violation of the Standstill Agreement.¹¹¹ While there, Weir had numerous liaisons with local tribal chieftains as well, attempting to cultivate their support while aligning them firmly to Britain and its clients; he anticipated a large-scale British military deployment and

¹⁰⁷ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 28 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1488; UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 17 December 1952; R.C. Blackham Minute, 7 January 1953, C. Gandy Minute, 9 January 1953, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/18.

¹⁰⁸ MWI.

¹⁰⁹ PRPG to FO, 31 October 1952, PRO FO 371/98377 EA1084/268.

¹¹⁰ D. Greenhill Minute, 17 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98385 EA1084/432; Memcon: R. Bailey and P. Hart, 26 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1499. The Foreign Office viewed the Liwa rumours most seriously, informing American diplomats that London “could not countenance” Saudi action of that sort.

¹¹¹ D. Greenhill Memorandum, 29 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104275 EA1081/15.

wanted to facilitate this endeavour.¹¹² The Foreign Office also authorised the Sultan of Muscat to indulge in similar efforts, although Said had license to augment his attempts at oral persuasion with “substantial money gifts, [and] supply of motor cars and rifles,” as well as other inducements.¹¹³ The allegiance of Sheikh Saqr al-Naimi, Buraimi’s paramount tribal chief, constituted perhaps the most lucrative prize at stake. Saqr controlled Dhank, a strategic fort not far south of the oasis, and initially maintained a tenuous neutrality. The Foreign Office bemoaned Said’s clumsy and heavy-handed efforts to woo Saqr. At times his diplomacy seemed to push Saqr toward the Saudis rather than securing his loyalty for Britain.¹¹⁴ British misgivings were well-founded; Saqr eventually defected to Saudi Arabia’s camp, dealing a grave blow to Said’s quest for controlling Buraimi.¹¹⁵

In addition to its failure regarding cessation of hostilities, the Standstill Agreement also fell short in terms of mending the breach in Saudi-American relations. Although Tore Petersen contends the post-Standstill Agreement period marked the emergence of a long phase in which Washington “favoured Saudi Arabia” in Arabian boundary disputes, United States officials did not in fact demonstrate any real partiality.¹¹⁶ Instead, they hoped to use this superficially quiet interval as an opportunity for persuading Riyadh to accept a judicial solution, such as arbitration. Prince Faisal, however, informed Acheson that arbitration would never suffice, while maintaining pressure for direct American participation. He wanted United States observers to establish posts at Buraimi and monitor cease-fire arrangements so that British infractions

¹¹² See, for example, PRO FO 371/104276 EA1081/45. These telegrams and minutes outline Weir’s mission, as well as high-level British support for his covert role. Mann, p. 36, discusses Weir’s anticipation of “substantial further increase” in British forces near Buraimi.

¹¹³ PAM to FO, 4 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104275 EA1081/26.

¹¹⁴ R.C. Blackham Minute, 15 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104275 EA1081/33. Rentz, p. 103 discusses the Dhank fort.

¹¹⁵ Henderson, pp. 41, 167-68.

¹¹⁶ Petersen.

would be apparent.¹¹⁷ When Acheson persisted in his original position rejecting direct American involvement, Faisal became so agitated that he threatened to align Saudi Arabia with Moscow, warning of Riyadh's "desperate straits...a drowning man will grasp at a snake—even a poisonous one—if it is his only chance to prevent going under."¹¹⁸

Operation Boxer: Eden Reinforces British Positions

Deteriorating Saudi-American ties paralleled a similar trend in Anglo-Saudi relations, and as tension at Buraimi escalated, Eden and his Arabian experts contemplated their options if: Riyadh established a presence at Liwa, rejected arbitration on British terms, did not recall Turki from the oasis, or, worst of all, sanctioned additional expansion of Turki's activities beyond Buraimi.¹¹⁹ These officials again considered, but again rejected as solutions *in themselves*, strategies based on "increas[ed] money subsidies" to win back local potentates whose loyalties had shifted; they knew Saudi financial resources would overwhelm those of Britain.¹²⁰ Eden, whose experience in Europe during the rise of Adolf Hitler had to a tremendous extent shaped his perceptions of power and political interaction, thought Buraimi's present crisis sprang directly from British boundary 'concessions' to Saudi Arabia in the 1930s, and weakness at Abadan in 1951. Such appeasement would stop. To show Britain's resolve, and to halt decay in the Hashemite-Gulf Arch, Eden decided significant reinforcement of British Persian Gulf military positions in early 1953 was appropriate. Such deployments might also curtail a rising tide of defections by many prominent Eastern Arabian sheikhs, he thought, and

¹¹⁷ Memcon: D. Acheson and Prince Faisal, 2 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1493.

¹¹⁸ Memcon: E. Plitt and Prince Faisal, 4 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1494.

¹¹⁹ FO Memorandum, 8 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98385 EA1084/453 stresses British assumptions that failing to secure arbitration might place Britain in a potentially untenable position, since "time is on Saudi Arabia's side."

¹²⁰ PRPG to FO, 10 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98385 EA1084/432; J. Bowker Memorandum, 15 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98387 EA1084/492; Burrows, p. 99. Hay requested, and received, Foreign Office approval to engage Saudi Arabia in a financial contest, so far as limited British resources allowed. London buttressed these efforts by cajoling IPC to "spend further sums" in pursuit of British regional interests; IPC complied. The Foreign Office realised, however, that such efforts *in themselves* would fail.

place Britain in an advantageous position to use force not only at Buraimi, but throughout all disputed areas if necessary.¹²¹

In mid-December 1952, he revealed this plan, *Operation Boxer*, to the Cabinet, after having secured tentative Ministry of Defence and Chiefs of Staff support.¹²² In these presentations, Eden stressed the importance of Britain's Persian Gulf oil interests as the compelling factor for his recommendation that London take as strong a stand as necessary to preserve regional preponderance.¹²³ The Foreign Secretary suggested to his colleagues that compromise only encouraged Britain's Arab adversaries to expand their claims, thereby accelerating the erosion of British Gulf hegemony.

Eden thought British officials could publicly justify a firm regional stand by emphasising their Gulf clients' higher standard of living vis-à-vis that in Saudi Arabia, his implication being Eastern Arabian quality of life would diminish if the Saudis established coastal footholds. The Foreign Office perceived danger in this line of publicity; they assessed Britain's ally, Sheikh Shakhbut of Abu Dhabi, as "such a second-rate person" that British representatives would have a difficult time indicating any real

¹²¹ Eden had been remarkably hawkish regarding Abadan, demanding that British forces defend AIOC refineries with military force. Once nationalisation became a *fait accompli*, he consistently advocated firm measures to overturn Mossadegh's gambit; see Onslow, pp. 142-43, 148-49; Rothwell, p. 101; and Carlton, pp. 316-17. Annex to COSC Memorandum, 3 July 1956, *BDEEP:CG&EE I* no. 51 shows that the 'Abadan syndrome' had profound institutional longevity. Embassy London to DOS, 13 May 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1472 outlines Foreign Office assumptions that earlier British 'generosity' on Arabian boundaries only "increased Saudi demands with no evidence of reciprocal moderation or compromise." FO to UK Embassy Washington, 31 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104276 EA1081/43, US Embassy London to DOS, 11 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1495, and US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 18 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1497 discuss Foreign Office fears over wavering loyalties of erstwhile British partisans in and around Buraimi, as well as a growing consensus that Britain needed to use force to protect vital Gulf interests. Cotton, Chapter Two, describes the ways in which Eden's experiences during the 1930s shaped his foreign policy horizons.

¹²² COSC (52) 170th Meeting, 15 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98387 EA1084/448. Along with their tentative approval of *Boxer*, the Chiefs emphasised a need for careful British planning, given the political complexities of such an operation.

¹²³ Cabinet Memorandum, 13 April 1945, *BDEEP IP/CP I* no. 42 shows that Eden had for years realised the critical importance of Gulf petroleum, and, interestingly, conveys his 'anti-appeasement' fixation as well: "The quality which Middle Eastern peoples recognise above all others is strength. [Britain has retained its position] because the Middle East never lost confidence in our resolution and in our ultimate ability to win through. If we invite...other powers to share burdens which we have hitherto carried in the

benefits from Britain's Gulf presence. Foreign Office experts also understood that high rates of poverty and ill-health in the British-protected Trucial Sheikdoms belied Eden's claims regarding the positive aspects of connections with London.¹²⁴

These reservations did not knock out *Boxer*, which entailed movement of significant air, sea, and land forces to the Persian Gulf. Royal Navy assets, including frigates and the cruiser *Ceylon*, soon steamed through Hormuz with orders to remain on station indefinitely. Royal Air Force deployments included a squadron of Vampire fighter-bombers and six Meteor jets to airfields in Abu Dhabi. And, in a splendid example of the mutually reinforcing nature of Britain's Hashemite-Gulf Arch, Whitehall planned to shift ground troops and a dozen Ferret armoured vehicles from British depots in Iraq to military bases at Sharjah, about a hundred miles due north of Buraimi.¹²⁵ Since Ministers realised economic and logistical constraints meant British ground forces could not remain in theatre indefinitely, newly-mustered Trucial Oman Levies needed to shoulder the long-run burden of protecting British regional interests.¹²⁶ Therefore, bolstering both the quantity and quality of existing Levy forces became necessary.

Middle East, the countries concerned will construe our action not as statesmanship but as abdication..."
See also Eden's 1 November 1938 letter to N. Chamberlain, in Eden, *Dictators*, p. 491.

¹²⁴ Eden's Cabinet presentations transpired on 4 December 1952 (PRO CAB 128(52) 102nd Conclusions) and 22 December 1952 (PRO CAB 128(52) 107th Conclusions). In the latter meeting, Eden outlined *Boxer* particulars; in both meetings, he clarified that Britain's stake in *Persian Gulf oil* catalysed his decision to escalate this quarrel with Saudi Arabia. D. Greenhill Minute, 20 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104275 EA1081/19 has Foreign Office commentary on Shakhbut's inadequacies; Michael Weir also stressed this point (MWI). See also Joyce, "Perspectives." Documentary assessments of appalling Trucial Coast living standards came somewhat later (PRPG to FO, 12 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109834 EA1081/291), but widespread British knowledge of poor living conditions presumably existed even during *Boxer*.

¹²⁵ FO Memorandum, 19 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98387 EA1084/499 and PRPG to FO, 5 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104275 EA1081/18 establish the 'Iraqi link.' Most of these armoured forces came from Britain's base at Habbaniyah, Iraq. DOS to US Embassy London, 7 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1531 has information on air assets. Ashton, *Problem*, p. 14 maintains that Iraq became a crucial focus of British strategic efforts in the Middle East only in 1955. The pivotal role of Iraqi assets in *Boxer* and other campaigns in the early 1950s indicates otherwise.

¹²⁶ Following acute Foreign Office-Chiefs of Staff disagreement regarding the efficacy and value of such a force, Britain formed the Trucial Levies in March 1951, agreeing to provide all funding, on a recurrent basis, for this organisation. PRO FO 371/91310 EA1201/15 has details on funding and force formation, while COSC (49) 70th Report, 23 February 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E2594G, C.J. Pelly Memorandum, 25 March 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E5621G, Arab Legion Commander to FO, 23 July 1949, PRO FO 816/158, and B. Burrows Memorandum, 23 September 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E11560G outline

After resolving a number of internal controversies regarding the efficacy and value of such a force, Britain had recently organised these Levies upon a nucleus of Arab Legionnaires—British officers, including Levy Commander Michael Hankin-Turvin, and Jordanian troops.¹²⁷ This amalgamation caused Ibn Saud grave concern; he vehemently protested that locating “Hashemite troops on [Saudi] frontiers is the same as Moscow placing its troops on British borders.”¹²⁸ He perceived British deployment of these forces to Eastern Arabia as yet another scheme to undercut Saudi Arabia while fostering Hashemite territorial and political aggrandisement.¹²⁹

Eden was in no mood to accommodate Saudi misgivings, however, and pressed ahead with Trucial Levy expansion. In late 1952, these Levies enjoyed a slight numerical advantage over Turki’s detachment at Buraimi.¹³⁰ *Boxer* stipulated a three- or fourfold Levy increase over a two month span, in tandem with a 33% increase in annual Levy funding. The Foreign Office, which intended to augment Levy strength in the near future to allow these units “to stand on their own feet,” strongly supported this plan.¹³¹ Churchill agreed with his Foreign Secretary’s military recommendations, in fact suggesting Defence Ministry planners accelerate deployment tempo to allow concentration of British

Foreign Office-Chiefs of Staff discord. Political Agent C.J. Pelly, for instance, thought such military units “would be weapon[s] of very great political advantage to us in the whole of the Gulf...[they] could be used in a show of force to tip the scales in our favour in a political issue,” and Bernard Burrows thought these Levies had value for guarding IPC crews, as they carried out petroleum surveys and drilling. The Chiefs of Staff, on the other hand, thought Trucial Levies would waste precious government resources.

¹²⁷ I. Lucas, p. 39; Henderson, p. 80; Heard-Bey, pp. 312-313. UK Embassy Washington to FO, 26 April 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5 illustrates that Riyadh knew of—and feared—Arab Legion/TOL connections. MOD to GHQMELF, 16 September 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E11470/G has additional details on these connections, while FO Memorandum, 19 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98387 EA1084/499 outlines Arab Legion support for *Boxer*.

¹²⁸ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 11 January 1951, PRO FO 371/91310 EA1201/2.

¹²⁹ PRPG to FO, 15 January 1951, PRO FO 371/91310 EA1201/3; UK Embassy Washington to FO, 26 April 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5. Hay, who feared “appeasing” Saudi Arabia, suggested refusing Ibn Saud’s request that Britain avoid placing Arab Legion personnel in Trucial Levies. UK Embassy Washington to FO, 14 February 1951, PRO FO 371/91310 EA1201/17 shows that, like Riyadh, the State Department also opposed using Arab Legionnaires in this capacity.

¹³⁰ Mann, p. 36.

¹³¹ R.C. Blackham Minute, 5 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98385 EA1084/430; A.D.M Ross Memorandum, 31 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104274 EA1081/5; MWI. The Chiefs of Staff recommended that Aden Levies fill the breach during this TOL augmentation project.

forces in the Gulf without delay. Other Ministers followed Churchill's lead; his Cabinet subsequently approved Eden's plan for supplementing Persian Gulf forces. Saudi rejection of British arbitration terms in mid-December undoubtedly contributed to Cabinet approbation on this issue.¹³²

In a harbinger of his later obsession with pursuing British interests unilaterally and in secret, even with respect to London's closest allies, Eden steadfastly opposed providing the United States with any prior notification of imminent British deployments. He rationalised his tight-lipped mode of alliance politics by arguing the desirability of "put[ting] these measures in hand and explain[ing] their purpose to the Americans *after* they ha[ve] been taken."¹³³ In light of significant United States strategic and economic regional interests, Eden's preference for reticence appears rather odd. Apparently, he feared American objections to *Boxer*, and resented United States interference in what he viewed as an exclusively British sphere. For years he had in fact predicted Saudi-American conspiracies might "usurp [the] pre-eminent place we have always held...in the Arab world...[a pre-eminence] our strategic interests [dictate] we ought to continue to hold."¹³⁴

Eden's Foreign Office subordinates generally concurred with his beliefs on this count, and suggested other ways that London could keep pressure on Saudi Arabia in addition to the military build-up, such as underwriting campaigns to "spread rumours about the Saudis." Some of this proposed rumour-mongering included stories about

¹³² DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 17 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1496. Within one week of its initial rejection, however, and well before initiation of *Boxer*, Riyadh expressed interest in arbitration; see Memcon: R. Bailey and P. Hart, 26 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1499.

¹³³ PRO CAB 128 (52) 108th Conclusions, 30 December 1952. These conclusions do not record other Ministers' sentiments on Eden's covert predilections.

¹³⁴ Carlton, p. 404 cites Eden's 15 September 1944 Memorandum outlining his fears regarding "American usurpation." US Embassy London to DOS, 11 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1495 intimated American opposition to British Gulf reinforcement. American Ambassador Walter Gifford prophesied undesirable outcomes, including possible "full-scale [Anglo-Saudi] war," and disruption of ongoing efforts to secure arbitration. See also Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 89.

Prince Faisal's "extravagance, immorality, and greed," as well as gossip that Arabian Bedouin would get a larger share of oil wealth under British protection than under Saudi suzerainty.¹³⁵

Eden's plans for presenting the United States with a Middle Eastern *fait accompli* fell apart when, in a careless moment, Foreign Office representatives unintentionally leaked details about *Boxer* deployments to American diplomats in London.¹³⁶ A furious Eden wondered how the United States could learn about British intentions "almost before we have made up our own minds?" and his private secretary recorded Eden's extreme displeasure over these security breaches, which essentially compromised his plan for secrecy. Once Washington had intimations that Britain stood at the brink of large-scale fortification of its Arabian positions, keeping the United States in the dark made little sense. Based on guidance he received from Eastern Department officials, Eden therefore relented, agreeing to give Washington general information on upcoming British military deployments. He stressed, however, the irrelevancy of subsequent American approval or disapproval of these measures; *Boxer*'s necessity sprang from British desire to "protect our own interests in territory in which we have responsibilities." The operation therefore transcended any United States concerns or misgivings.¹³⁷ In light of Eden's pending

¹³⁵ A.D.M. Ross Minute, 23 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104276 EA1081/43; C. Gandy Minute, 9 January 1953, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/18. Gandy thought Britain should "seek [American] advice and support sparingly." D. Greenhill and A.D.M. Ross Minutes, 20 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104275 EA1081/19 outline proposed British roorbacks. To their credit, Greenhill's Foreign Office superiors decided against propagating these blackguards about Saudi behaviour. They doubted the benefits of this strategy; perhaps Prince Faisal's honorary British knighthood also influenced their restraint.

¹³⁶ US Embassy London to DOS, 23 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1495 elaborates on the Foreign Office leak.

¹³⁷ D. Greenhill Memorandum, 23 December 1952; A. Eden and C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minutes, 24 December 1952; A.D.M Ross Minute, 29 December 1952; A. Eden Minute; FO to UK Embassy Washington, 31 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104276 EA1081/43. Shuckburgh, who later became FO Assistant Secretary, served as Eden's Private Secretary during *Boxer* deliberations. Unfortunately his memoirs—*Descent to Suez*, hereafter '*Descent*'—while an excellent source for Middle Eastern events in the 1950s, lack useful information regarding British military manoeuvres in the Persian Gulf in early 1953. True to his stated position, Eden disregarded American apprehension over *Boxer*, and carried this reinforcement through despite Washington's belief that such action "placed the entire situation on a different plane;" see Memcon: R. Bailey and P. Hart, 26 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1499.

notification, British diplomats in Washington prepared arguments to make their American counterparts more amenable to these imminent deployments. They emphasised Saudi Arabia's status as a "medieval despotism" bent on exercising power unscrupulously to overwhelm British Gulf positions, while highlighting the "purely defensive" character of *Boxer*.¹³⁸

Like the Americans, Political Resident Hay also learned specific operational details for *Boxer* relatively late in the game. In late November, Eden informed Hay of possible "[military] demonstrations in the sheikhs' capitals," but by its final form, *Boxer* differed from this original concept, and apparently Hay received notification of these modifications only a few days before Cabinet discussions regarding *Boxer*.¹³⁹ Basic operational tenets met with Hay's approval, although *Boxer*'s timing, transient nature, and overall force levels caused him apprehension. Instead of merely embarking on a temporary 'demonstration' of politico-military resolve, Hay proposed a long-term presence for British forces, particularly the armoured vehicles because of their psychological value. He also sought enhanced manpower—including additional Arab Legion troops capable of handling tactical communications—and secured approval to increase the number of Ferret armoured vehicles from 12 to 16. Because of an inability to select acceptable areas where these units could come ashore, as well as his concern over bad winter weather in the Gulf, Hay hoped Churchill's Cabinet would delay *Boxer* for at least one month.¹⁴⁰

The Commander of British Middle East Land Forces supported Hay's proposal for postponing deployments; he too had serious concerns over Ferret landing zones. Deep

¹³⁸ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 31 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104274 EA1081/8.

¹³⁹ A. Eden to PRPG, 29 November 1952, FO 371/98385 EA1084/430. In RHD, 20 December 1952, Hay refers to receiving a Foreign Office "bombshell"; presumably this was his notification that *Boxer* would proceed along modified lines.

¹⁴⁰ PRPG to FO, 24 & 28 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104274 EA1081/5.

sand and poor Trucial Coast infrastructure placed severe limitations on which sites would suffice for landing and unloading heavy equipment. A delay would also eliminate the undesirable gap between *Boxer*'s temporary provisions, and longer-term projects for building up local forces to defend British Gulf interests in perpetuity.¹⁴¹

Like Hay and Middle East General Headquarters, Pelham questioned Eden's proposed demonstration of resolve, although he focused almost entirely on the psychological aspects of *Boxer*. He thought fortification of British military positions would smack of intimidation, and might backfire. Putting Riyadh 'under the gun' would diminish, not increase, prospects for Saudi acceptance of arbitration. Pelham also expressed anxiety about possibly deleterious effects of a military demonstration on British moral and public relations positions. He suggested Whitehall hold *Boxer* in reserve, and unveil it only if Riyadh unequivocally rejected arbitration.¹⁴²

On balance, their suggestions played poorly in London. British authorities there refused to countenance any delay in deployment schedules, primarily because *Boxer*'s objectives were in transition as of early January 1953. Eden now contemplated a unilateral boundary declaration along disputed frontiers—with the Blue or Riyadh Line as its basis—and considered using Britain's strengthened military presence to secure and enforce this new demarcation. Moving military aircraft and armoured vehicles to the Persian Gulf had therefore become a matter of the highest urgency.¹⁴³

British determination to secure disputed-area access for IPC survey and drilling crews by early spring, before unpleasant weather set in and made such activity difficult or

¹⁴¹ GHQMELF to AOC Iraq, 1 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104274 EA1081/7.

¹⁴² Pelham's reluctance apparently reversed his earlier zeal for a military solution, as outlined in US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 18 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1497. The basis for his shift is unclear.

¹⁴³ A.D.M. Ross Memorandum, 31 December 1952, PRO FO 371/104274 EA1081/5; FO Minute, 5 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104274 EA1081/4. British authorities had considered a unilateral boundary declaration since November (FO Memorandum, 24 November 1952, PRO FO 371/98385 EA1084/445; J. Bowker Memorandum, 3 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98383 EA1084/401), but this policy lacked significant momentum until late December.

impossible, constituted another factor dictating scrupulous attention to Eden's ambitious initial schedule. Persian Gulf weather extremes—winter atmospheric volatility and summer heat—compelled Whitehall to operate within a narrow seasonal window, but in the end, oil's vital importance to Britain overwhelmed other concerns, forcing British military planners to contend with unfavourable winter conditions. Indeed, for IPC the stakes had risen so high that in early 1953 the company decided to bankroll assembly and provisioning of the Muscat and Oman Field Force (MOFF), an army under Sultan Said's command. IPC provided a block grant of 30,000 pounds for MOFF start-up expenses, and had obligations to provide additional funding, approximately 100,000 pounds yearly, on a recurring basis. IPC also had responsibility for providing all MOFF transportation support.¹⁴⁴ This force soon commenced patrols in Fahud and Huqf, regions in north-central and central Oman respectively, asserting Sultanate authority there, while also protecting IPC survey crews.¹⁴⁵

In response to Pelham's concern about "premature [Persian Gulf] demonstrations" alienating Saudi Arabia, Eastern Department officials predicted an opposite effect from *Boxer*. Displaying "toughness in...our attitude" would influence Saudi behaviour favourably, rather than catalysing further Anglo-Saudi estrangement.¹⁴⁶ Maintenance and logistical considerations compelled the Ministry of Defence to reject Hay's request for long-term deployment of armoured vehicles to Abu Dhabi.¹⁴⁷

Whitehall used the occasion of these critiques to delineate formal goals for its upcoming show of force; in the main these reflected Eden's original conception, but some

¹⁴⁴ FO Memorandum, 24 November 1952, PRO FO 371/98385 EA1084/445; US Embassy London to DOS, 10 March 1954, USNA RG 59 886E.2553/3-1054; Innes, pp. 23, 50, 74, 94-95; J. Morris, p. 25; Henderson, pp. 129, 133.

¹⁴⁵ COSC (53) 24th Committee: "Protection of British Interests in the Trucial States," 15 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104276 EA1081/70. FO Memorandum, 19 February 1953, PRO FO 371/104278 EA1081/129 also establishes the primacy of oil exploration and exploitation for British strategy in Arabia.

¹⁴⁶ R.C. Blackham Minute, 5 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104274 EA0181/4.

¹⁴⁷ Undated MOD Memorandum, PRO FO 371/104274 EA1081/7.

refinement did occur. For instance, British planners now advocated control of selected frontier communications and water centers as an optimal method for resisting potential Saudi overland thrusts.¹⁴⁸ Also, a consensus emerged emphasising the necessity of *British* military assets in the region; local forces, no matter how numerous, simply did not suffice. In addition to deterring Saudi Arabia from asserting Eastern Arabian claims, a direct British presence would buttress flagging morale among Britain's clients, while perhaps even recapturing wayward tribal allegiances.¹⁴⁹ The Chiefs of Staff, who understood the link between military power and political objectives, placed special emphasis upon these latter aims.¹⁵⁰

Once British officials had refined *Boxer*'s schedule and goals, they constructed a campaign of deception. Such efforts would enhance the effectiveness of Britain's deployments by maximising Saudi shock and surprise; British armour and warplanes appearing along disputed frontiers without warning could not fail to impress Riyadh as to the strength of British resolve. Therefore, after informing its embassies worldwide of these imminent Gulf reinforcements, and outlining key political imperatives behind the manoeuvres, London instructed embassy staff to "deny knowledge [of the deployments and their ultimate destination] and suggest these are ordinary training moves of no political significance." This concealment contributed to British efforts to blind Saudi Arabia regarding pending British moves.¹⁵¹

By mid-January 1953, Defence Ministry planners were well along with one facet of *Boxer*: Eden's plan to augment local military forces in the interest of establishing their long-run viability. In coordination with Middle East General Headquarters, the Ministry scheduled the deployment of hundreds of troops from the Arab Legion and Aden

¹⁴⁸ GHQMELF to MOD, 1 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104274 EA1081/6.

¹⁴⁹ FO to COSC and PRPG, 6 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104276 EA1081/42A.

¹⁵⁰ GHQMELF to AOC Iraq, 1 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104274 EA1081/7.

Protectorate to Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and other Trucial Coast locations. These organisations also scheduled long-term provision and maintenance of large military forces in the Persian Gulf. By early February, such supplements had bolstered Trucial Levy strength beyond one hundred men and, within a year, troop levels reached five hundred.¹⁵² Eden's plan for declaring and securing unilateral Arabian frontiers constituted a thornier component of this demonstration of force. Such a policy necessarily entailed Turki's expulsion from Buraimi; its inherently offensive nature rendered obsolete initial force projections for *Boxer*. If Britain proclaimed new boundaries and established a zone off-limits to Saudi Arabia and its allies, dozens or even hundreds of additional troops would be necessary.¹⁵³

Developments around Buraimi in late January lent new urgency to London's quest for offensive capacity. Soon after British armoured vehicles and Royal Air Force Vampires and Brigands from bases in Iraq arrived at Sharjah in accordance with *Boxer*'s revised timetables, rumours that Saudi Arabia might undertake its own reinforcement programme to parry Britain's ongoing demonstration of force caused Foreign Office anxiety.¹⁵⁴ Saudi national Sultan Bin Mahdi apparently planned to lead a column of troops eastward, to fortify Turki's position at Buraimi, and assist in his efforts to recruit local tribes. Britain immediately protested to Riyadh, while requesting American assistance in compelling Saudi leaders to abandon this forward policy.¹⁵⁵ The Foreign Office feared an imminent clash between pro-Saudi tribesmen and those still loyal to Abu Dhabi and Muscat.¹⁵⁶ Such a confrontation occurred in late January at the settlement of

¹⁵¹ FO to British Embassies, 8 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104275 EA1081/35.

¹⁵² GHQMELF to MOD, 14 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104276 EA1081/67G; Mann, pp. 36, 45.

¹⁵³ COSC (53) 24th Committee, 15 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104276 EA1081/70.

¹⁵⁴ GHQMELF to MOD, 21 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104275 EA1081/27G. British armour and airpower arrived on January 21st.

¹⁵⁵ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 22 January 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1502.

¹⁵⁶ FO Minute, 23 January 1953, PRO FO 371/104277 EA1081/90; Greenhill, p. 78.

Wadi el Quar, where tribesmen allied with Saudi Arabia collided with Trucial Levies under Michael Weir's supervision. British forces, who enjoyed a significant psychological advantage by virtue of armoured vehicles in their possession, triumphed. Riyadh's Bedouin allies retreated into the desert.¹⁵⁷

Development and Implementation of Britain's Eastern Arabian Blockade

Although this engagement showed Boxer's success in bolstering the fighting capacity of local British forces, immediate operational results disappointed Foreign Office authorities. Just as Pelham predicted, Saudi intractability had, if anything, risen a notch since the year began. Confusion over Britain's next move fuelled tension between London and Britain's Middle East Chiefs of Mission.¹⁵⁸ Gradually, British officials reached a consensus that while arbitration on their terms still represented an optimal outcome, such an arrangement remained desirable *only* if Turki no longer resided at Buraimi. His six-month stay had seriously damaged British positions; defections of prominent tribesmen continued at an alarming rate. His presence in the disputed zone also "fatally prejudiced" IPC's desire for petroleum exploration. So long as Turki held his position, IPC crews could not use Buraimi as a logistical staging area for surveying at Fahud. In anticipation of a future plebiscite that would determine Buraimi's status, Saudi emissaries had assembled an "election headquarters" there; London, having no such organisation and unsure of prevailing political persuasions at Buraimi, needed to preclude any possibility of a solution by majority vote.¹⁵⁹ Turki had to go, and since the Saudi had

¹⁵⁷ D. Greenhill Memorandum: "Saudi Frontier Dispute," 19 February 1953, PRO FO 371/104278 EA1081/129.

¹⁵⁸ RHD, 7 February 1953, illustrates Hay's resentment over seemingly arbitrary shifts in British policy.

¹⁵⁹ FO Memorandum, 19 February 1953, PRO FO 371/104278 EA1081/129 has clear expressions of British frustrations. See also Memcon: W. Aldrich and W. Strang, 31 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1509. Henderson, pp. 83, 85-86 and Innes, p. 22, describe IPC disappointment regarding its thus-far unsuccessful attempts to begin oil prospecting at Fahud.

no intention of leaving peaceably, Britain and its clients would have to deal with him through force.¹⁶⁰

Eden assessed Turki's outright eviction as too dangerous. Instead, he suggested blockading Saudi forces at Buraimi, in coordination with British denunciation of the 1951 and 1952 Anglo-Saudi standstill agreements, as well as unilateral frontier declaration. Such action would confine Saudi Arabia well west of disputed areas.¹⁶¹ The Cabinet accepted this proposal, vowing to pursue blockade efforts "vigourously to [a] conclusion," even if Washington registered opposition.¹⁶² British forces, which as of early spring 1953 included a dozen Ferret armoured vehicles and 400 Levies (roughly half from Aden and the balance from Abu Dhabi, Muscat, Oman, and the Arab Legion), subsequently swept south and west from Sharjah, occupied key fortifications along disputed frontiers, built over a dozen new military posts on Buraimi's periphery, and cut Saudi supply lines, leaving Turki and his force isolated. Interdiction focused on food, since that resource apparently represented Turki's major logistical vulnerability. This blockade commenced in late March 1953 and persisted, with varying degrees of effectiveness, for fifteen months.¹⁶³ Riyadh responded by warning of impending troop deployments across disputed frontiers if London continued its blockade. Ibn Saud also labeled the British manoeuvre as a blatant Standstill Agreement violation.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ A.D.M. Ross Minute, 21 February 1953, PRO FO 371/104278 EA1081/129.

¹⁶¹ COSC (53) 35th Meeting, 16 March 1953, PRO FO 371/104282 EA1081/239G.

¹⁶² PRO CAB 128 (53) 42nd Conclusions, 13 July 1953, and 43rd Conclusions, 16 July 1953.

¹⁶³ US Embassy London to DOS, 31 March 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1509; PPS to Chairman, NSC Planning Staff, 24 June 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1518; PRPG to FO, 17 March 1953 and R.C. Blackham Minute, 18 March 1953, PRO FO 371/104282 EA1081/216; FO Memorandum, 18 March 1953, PRO FO 371/104282 EA1081/222; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 22 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1542; Mann, p. 36. Riyadh apparently learned of British plans; immediately before Britain imposed its blockade, Saudi reinforcements traveled to Buraimi. JPS Report, 2 July 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 409 shows Britain's commitment to keeping adequate forces in theatre, thereby supporting British interests and enforcing the blockade. Michael Weir notes that British interdiction, while effective in some ways, proved far too porous to secure immediate success (MWI).

¹⁶⁴ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 29 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1508.

While Britain and Saudi Arabia sparred with growing intensity, newly inaugurated President Dwight Eisenhower and the State Department continued Acheson's long-running stance of 'interested impartiality.'¹⁶⁵ American 'interest' in Gulf resources grew yearly. As Eisenhower took office, the Departments of State, Defense, and Interior submitted a report asserting Washington should "allow...nothing to interfere with availability of [Middle Eastern] oil to the Free World," since this commodity composed over half of the world's known reserves, and played "vital...vastly important...essential...crucial... critical... [and] indispensable" roles in NATO industrial and military activities.¹⁶⁶ Despite American attempts to strike a balance between conflicting Anglo-Saudi boundary claims—thus preserving some degree of regional stability and insuring continued Free World access to Middle East oil—Acheson's successor, Secretary of State J.F. Dulles, tended to favour Britain regarding Buraimi's fate. Although the Secretary had no intention of sitting in judgment on the validity of each party's claims, his *prima facie* analysis indicated British clients had the strongest case for oasis sovereignty. He deplored growing Saudi territorial ambitions, and resented Ibn Saud's use of the 1950 Truman Guarantee as an aegis for boundary assertiveness. Dulles also informed the King that the United States would oppose any Saudi disputed-area campaigns unless Riyadh consulted with Washington before undertaking initiatives there. In general, the Secretary supported British arbitration proposals—thus continuing an American policy dating to December 1952—and rejected outright Saudi Arabia's quest for American support of a tripartite plebiscite committee, since such a procedure might be "unfair."¹⁶⁷ His pro-British orientation lasted for the first two and a half years of

¹⁶⁵ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 3 February 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1502.

¹⁶⁶ NSC Report 138/1: "Security and International Issues Arising from the Current Petroleum Situation," 6 January 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 279.

¹⁶⁷ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 3 February 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1502; DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 2 April 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1512. This latter dispatch provided an unambiguous blueprint

Eisenhower's presidency, ending only when Britain, without consulting or even informing the United States beforehand, launched Operation *Bonaparte* in October 1955. By resorting to military force at a delicate Middle Eastern moment, London alienated the State Department and precipitated a major realignment in American policy.

Riyadh misjudged the new administration. Prince Faisal anticipated—correctly, as events demonstrated—opposition from outgoing President Truman and his staff regarding Saudi attempts to swing the United States into supporting a plebiscite. He therefore waited until Eisenhower took office to petition for American backing.¹⁶⁸ Several factors probably influenced Saudi thinking on this count. First, five years earlier Democrats in the United States had shown stronger support for Israel's creation than had their Republican counterparts. Many Arabs equated Truman's advocacy for a Jewish homeland with antagonism to Islamic states in the Middle East; Saudi Arabia, with its strong tradition of anti-Zionism, embraced this sentiment quite strongly. So Riyadh hoped for more favourable American attitudes from incoming Republican leaders. Although to Faisal the new Administration's stance toward Saudi Arabia was somewhat unclear, he had little incentive to press Truman's State Department, since every sign indicated an inevitable rebuff.¹⁶⁹

Second, Parker Hart, Director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern Affairs, had recently notified Faisal that prevailing American perceptions opposed pro-

for American policy in boundary disputes. DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 17 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1496, US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 18 and 20 December 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* nos. 1497 and 1498 show that by mid-December 1952, the State Department definitely supported arbitration, although did not necessarily favour every British proposal.

¹⁶⁸ Faisal had an appointment with American officials on 6 January 1953, but a day before this meeting he cancelled without explanation; see *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1500.

¹⁶⁹ Saudi-American conversations in early January 1953 could hardly have inspired Riyadh's confidence; Washington rejected direct American involvement in settling boundary disputes, recommending arbitration since Anglo-Saudi negotiations seemed unworkable. See DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 10 January 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1501.

Saudi partiality, and instead favoured an ‘honest broker’ stance.¹⁷⁰ But the Prince’s Fabian tactics failed when Dulles followed Acheson’s lead, advising Saudi Arabia to forget about American participation on a tripartite commission. However, he repeatedly emphasised to Saudi officials that his anti-plebiscite stance sprang from American interest in an equitable and quick solution, rather than pro-British bias. Most American diplomats, including Ambassador Hare, generally supported Dulles’ clarification of policy, although Hare lamented the accompanying “heavy drain on reserves of American goodwill [in Saudi Arabia].”¹⁷¹

Following this initial rebuff, Faisal did not give up easily, but his persistence came to nothing. On numerous occasions in the spring of 1953, he pressed Dulles and Undersecretary of State Walter Bedell Smith to reconsider their rejection of Ibn Saud’s tripartite commission scheme, suggesting they begin active intervention in Arabian frontier struggles. As a basis for these entreaties, the Prince emphasised Saudi Arabia’s traditionally “special status” in United States foreign policy and the “unusually close ties” between Riyadh and Washington. Saudi diplomats also argued that Dulles’ rejection of a plebiscite signaled “taking sides with [Britain].”¹⁷² The Secretary and his subordinates rejected Faisal’s sophistry, refusing to adjust United States policy. They fell back on long-standing American interest in acting as an ‘honest broker’ who facilitated arrangements for a solution, while avoiding participation in adjudicating boundary quarrels.¹⁷³

After repeated representations, Faisal had wrung from American officials promises merely to “study the boundary question...very carefully.” Dulles left no doubt

¹⁷⁰ Hart, pp. 61-62.

¹⁷¹ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 22 January 1953; Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 3 February 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1502.

¹⁷² Memcon: Prince Faisal and J.F. Dulles, 23 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1452; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 29 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1508.

he intended to support arbitration as the best and fairest procedure for dispute resolution.¹⁷⁴ After British forces encircled Buraimi in early 1953, Faisal also pressed Dulles to compel Britain to lift the blockade, and restore the status quo, including resumption of the 1951 and 1952 standstill agreements.¹⁷⁵ In this endeavour, the Prince had more luck, although he did not obtain unqualified American support.

In addition to rousing Riyadh, British efforts to isolate Turki troubled ARAMCO as well. The American oil company, sensing danger in escalating Anglo-Saudi conflict, also sought active United States intervention. This overture failed, as American officials refused to abandon impartiality and rebutted the company's arguments in rather sardonic fashion.¹⁷⁶ ARAMCO executives made similar representations to the Foreign Office, in this case requesting that London support a plebiscite. Their clumsy and counterproductive presentation, which included suggestions for consummating a loose federation between Saudi Arabia and Britain's Gulf clients, horrified British officials, who informed ARAMCO representatives of the impossibility of making significant territorial or political concessions to Saudi Arabia. British strategy emphasised a *close* federation between its Gulf clients, with no role for Riyadh.¹⁷⁷

Dulles' grand tour of the Middle East in May 1953 included a two-day stint in Saudi Arabia. This visit provided Ibn Saud and his entourage with an excellent chance to importune the Secretary yet again for American intervention in boundary disputes, but Dulles stuck to arbitration as his preferred procedure for resolving these quarrels.¹⁷⁸ He

¹⁷³ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 27 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1507.

¹⁷⁴ Memcon: Prince Faisal and J.F. Dulles, 2 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1503; Memcon: Prince Faisal and W.B. Smith, 3 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1505; Memcon: Saudi Ambassador and W.B. Smith, 16 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1506.

¹⁷⁵ Memcon: W.B. Smith and Saudi Ambassador, 1 April 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1510.

¹⁷⁶ Memcon: J.W. Jernegan and ARAMCO Representatives, 3 April 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1513. Jernegan, for instance, questioned the depth of Ibn Saud's emotional connection to Buraimi—a major plank of ARAMCO presentations—since Saudi footholds there were less than a year old.

¹⁷⁷ Memcon: R. Bailey and T. Duce, 16 April 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1514.

¹⁷⁸ Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 90.

once again downplayed the 1950 Truman Guarantee as somewhat irrelevant in the present context, while defending Britain's Buraimi policies, juxtaposing British willingness to accept "neutral considerations of facts" with Saudi stubbornness. Dulles must have known his steadfast refusal to side with Saudi Arabia would spark arguments at these conversations, although the ferocity of the ensuing exchanges may have surprised him. Ibn Saud and his sons accused Dulles of failing to provide the support allies expect of one another, and appraised American friendship as nearly worthless since Washington had not broken Britain's blockade at Buraimi. Crown Prince Saud even suggested Saudi Arabia would abandon its relationship with the United States if Washington did not back the King more aggressively.¹⁷⁹

Dulles left Riyadh rather flustered; he reported to the National Security Council on the "poor" character of Saudi-American relations, owing to Ibn Saud's "old and crotchety" temperament. The Secretary realised Saudi Arabia's value to the West, based on that kingdom's strategic position and immense oil reserves, and thought the King might cut his connection to the United States. Despite this substantial risk, Dulles did not consider abandoning American impartiality. The President espoused a similar position, although he maintained a solution might be possible if Britain and Saudi Arabia set their minds to the project. On several subsequent occasions, Eisenhower informed Ibn Saud in polite but unambiguous terms that the United States fully supported arbitration, and close Saudi-American friendship did not compel Washington to back a plebiscite or any other Saudi schemes.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Memcon: Ibn Saud and J.F. Dulles, 18 May 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 34 and Memcon: Crown Prince Saud, Prince Faisal, and J.F. Dulles, 18 May 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 35 contain complete transcripts of the Riyadh conversations. These accounts directly contradict Petersen's contention that "Dulles refused to support the new British position" upon attaining the Secretaryship in 1953. See also RHOH.

¹⁸⁰ 147th NSC Meeting, 1 June 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 137; D. Eisenhower to Ibn Saud, 15 June 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1517.

Despite Dulles' strong stand against Saudi exhortations for American intervention at Buraimi, Churchill, his Cabinet, and some at the Foreign Office assumed the worst and suspected Saudi-American conversations in Riyadh represented a conspiracy to "kick out or do down Britain." United States Ambassador in Britain Winthrop Aldrich, recipient of Churchill's tirade, tried to mollify the Prime Minister by suggesting Assistant Secretary Henry Byroade, not Dulles, engineered Saudi-American plotting, because Byroade advocated "withdrawal and appeasement."¹⁸¹

Aldrich's curious tactic did not accurately reflect Saudi-American relations. The United States had pressured, not appeased, Saudi Arabia; by early summer 1953 this pressure had compelled Ibn Saud to abandon his notion of a plebiscite with tripartite commission oversight, and soon he grudgingly accepted arbitration. Although his motives for this *volte face* remain unclear, American influence almost certainly played a significant role. Perhaps Britain's blockade at Buraimi also played a role, though this is unlikely.¹⁸² In the history of Eastern Arabian boundary disputes, Saudi Arabia established a pattern of responding to force with escalation, not retreat.

In fact, concurrently with Ibn Saud's decision to shift away from American mediation and toward some form of arbitration, levies and tribesmen from the pro-Saudi Beni Kaab under Sultan Obaid's command prepared to break the blockade by besieging British and allied forces around Buraimi. This operation targeted key checkpoints—including Nuwai and Mahadha—along the road from Buraimi to Sharjah.¹⁸³ When

¹⁸¹ W. Strang Minute, 24 March 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 383; Memcon: W. Churchill and W. Aldrich, 22 May 1953, PRO FO 371/104257 E10345/21G; Burrows, p. 105. Although Byroade did not deserve Aldrich's "appeasement" label, he had long believed that the strength of British Middle Eastern politico-military positions were "overrated," and that continued financial deterioration would probably compel Britain to cut its regional commitments. See Memcon: DOS Officials and JCS, 18 June 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 76 and Memcon: H. Truman and H. Byroade, 8 August 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 82.

¹⁸² Memcon: J.F. Dulles and Lord Salisbury, 11 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1528 and *FRUS 1952-54 V* p. 1640, and DOS to FO, 28 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1534.

¹⁸³ PRO CAB 128 (53) 37th Conclusions, 29 June 1953.

Obaid's effort materialised in late June 1953, London contemplated bombing and strafing Saudi forces to beat back the Beni Kaab offensive. Ultimately, however, a series of tactical manoeuvres and superior British firepower dislodged the besiegers at Nuwai, rendering combat sorties unnecessary, and ending Ibn Saud's attempt to outflank British interdiction. Saudi casualties were four dead and five wounded; Britain suffered no dead or wounded.¹⁸⁴

Tensions resulting from this failed operation did nothing to ease the process of bilateral agreement to arbitration.¹⁸⁵ London and Riyadh held widely divergent ideas on the terms for such a solution, and Dulles found himself once again stuck in the middle, fending off new Saudi pleas for American mediation, while attempting to forge a covenant between parties who had little interest in compromise. June's Nuwai incident steeled his resolve to secure arbitration before Anglo-Saudi relations degenerated into open warfare.¹⁸⁶ London proposed an agreement based on two fundamental tenets: mutual withdrawal of all forces, with arbitration to begin immediately thereafter. Churchill's Cabinet suggested Eisenhower pressure Riyadh to accept these terms with minimum delay. Since mutual withdrawal meant Britain maintained possession of terrain surrounding Buraimi, and could therefore exert exclusive influence there, Saudi leaders opposed this stipulation, countering with a plan allowing Turki and a small detachment to remain at the oasis. Although in this plan London retained rights to establish a force of equal size, the plan also required Britain to lift its blockade and cease all "provocative"

¹⁸⁴ PRO CAB 128 (53) 38th Conclusions, 1 July 1953. As might be expected, the 'facts' about this incident at Nuwai caused considerable controversy. For conflicting Anglo-Saudi claims, see DOS to US Consulate Dhahran, 4 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1522, US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 5 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1524, and J.F. Dulles to D. Eisenhower, 7 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1526.

¹⁸⁵ Ibn Saud to D. Eisenhower, 2 July 1953, DDE:IS Box 46 illustrates the King's anger at the British counteroffensive. He alleged that Britain "bombed peaceful women and children...killing a number of them." Although British forces did not employ airpower in the Nuwai operation, they did unleash two-inch mortar fire, which probably explains his confusion. He soon dispatched another letter to Eisenhower, to which the President responded some months later (DOS:TSDSS Box 84, 30 October 1953).

¹⁸⁶ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 7 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1527.

action—such as low-level Royal Air Force sorties—before arbitration began. The Foreign Office rejected these terms. Turki's removal had been the central plank in British policy for nearly a year, and London had no intention of abandoning this objective.¹⁸⁷ His presence at Buraimi meant continued defection of British tribal allies, fuelling a similar ebb in British regional influence, thus weakening the Hashemite-Gulf Arch.¹⁸⁸

Dulles attempted to break this deadlock during a mid-July 1953 Anglo-American summit.¹⁸⁹ In difficult negotiations with Acting Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury, he proposed arbitration terms requiring Britain to lift its blockade, while prohibiting Turki from proselytising Buraimi's residents by means of rewards, persuasion, threats, or other devices, although the Saudi emir and a small detachment retained the right to stay at the oasis. To insure mutual compliance of these guidelines, Dulles suggested forming a Buraimi 'Observation Commission' of one Saudi, one British, and one neutral member. Salisbury, with Cabinet backing, rejected Dulles' terms because they allowed Turki to remain at Buraimi. Ministers agreed to hammer away at Dulles, hoping he would accept British proposals, and force Riyadh to agree to them as well.¹⁹⁰

After Salisbury returned to London, he debriefed his Cabinet colleagues on American attitudes, recommending Britain maintain its blockade—even if this policy threatened to undercut the possibility of arbitration—rather than conceding anything, such as agreeing Turki could remain at Buraimi. Salisbury had little hope American diplomats would support British proposals, since, in his view, Dulles' main concern was "placating Ibn Saud" because of American dependence on Saudi oil. While Salisbury's

¹⁸⁷ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 12 June 1953; DOS to US Embassy London, 19 June 1953; Embassy London to DOS, 24 June 1953; Memorandum from Director, PPS to Chairman, NSC Planning Staff, 24 June 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1518.

¹⁸⁸ US Embassy London to DOS, 6 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1525.

¹⁸⁹ Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 90.

¹⁹⁰ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and Lord Salisbury, 11 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1528 and *FRUS 1952-54 V* p. 1640; DOS to US Embassy London, 16 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1529; PRO CAB 128 (53)

conjecture about American motives was dubious, petroleum considerations undoubtedly *did* play a central role in Cabinet calculations; Ministers endorsed Salisbury's proposal because the "potential value...and importance of our own [Eastern Arabian] oil concessions" ruled out compromise.¹⁹¹ Salisbury forwarded these conclusions to American officials in late July, indicating British refusal to countenance Turki's presence at Buraimi, even if such a policy stymied arbitration.¹⁹²

This outcome was unacceptable to Dulles, whose basic priorities emphasised securing an arbitration agreement. He knew that as his search for solutions persisted, the risk of large-scale Anglo-Saudi hostilities rose, so once again he grappled with compromises that might be acceptable to both Riyadh and London. The Secretary drafted a plan requiring *all* military and administrative personnel that had entered disputed areas since August 1952 to withdraw no less than 350 miles from Buraimi. These stipulations seemingly reconciled disparate British and Saudi conditions. By forcing Turki to evacuate, they met British requirements, and simultaneous British withdrawal not only from Buraimi, but from a wide zone around the oasis as well, might assuage Saudi fears regarding British retention of preferential military positions.¹⁹³

His creativity failed to achieve a breakthrough; American diplomats in both London and Jeddah reported their host countries would reject Dulles' latest brainchild. Hare thought Ibn Saud would not trust British forces to withdraw from an 'exclusionary zone' around Buraimi in accordance with agreement terms, since this plan outlined no independent authority to enforce these stipulations.¹⁹⁴ Aldrich doubted London would evacuate personnel from a wide zone; he expected the Foreign Office to argue that at the

¹⁹¹ PRO CAB 128 (53) 44th Conclusions, 21 July 1953. The Cabinet assumed "commercial and economic interests" drove Dulles' proposal.

¹⁹² FO to DOS, 27 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1530.

¹⁹³ DOS to US Embassy London, 7 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1531.

very least, British administrators who had arrived since December 1952 should stay in the Trucial Coast, an area within Dulles' 'exclusionary zone.' Aldrich thought London might find Dulles' arbitration requirements more palatable if they required British personnel to withdraw only into undisputed territory, rather than from a vast 350 mile buffer zone. He also predicted a breakdown in law and order along disputed frontiers if Saudi and British legal authority departed, although he suggested forestalling this contingency by investing a 'neutral' commission with regional jurisdiction.¹⁹⁵

These wide-ranging objections meant Dulles' 'exclusionary zone' compromise never matured. In mid-August, therefore, he reconsidered, concluding that spinning his own plans was probably futile. Placing the burden on Britain and Saudi Arabia to come up with reasonable proposals seemed more sensible. However, by switching to such a position, Dulles risked continued stalemate, as these two Eastern Arabian antagonists might well refuse to offer terms beyond their original suggestions. At this point—since the Secretary inclined slightly toward Saudi proposals vis-à-vis British—he decided to mitigate any risk of continuing impasse by stressing primarily to London the importance of bona fide efforts to break the deadlock.¹⁹⁶

His slight pro-Saudi orientation in Summer 1953 owed to the asymmetry of American efforts in the previous six months, and the conclusions in NSC Report 155/1. After the United States repeatedly rejected Saudi requests for American mediation, and had browbeaten Riyadh so vigourously to accept arbitration—Britain's favoured solution—Dulles thought that, in the interest of balance, London should compromise in some fashion.¹⁹⁷ This did not mean he favoured Saudi arguments regarding boundary

¹⁹⁴ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 10 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1532.

¹⁹⁵ US Embassy London to DOS, 10 August 1953, *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ DOS to FO, 28 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1534.

¹⁹⁷ No doubt exchanges such as that between Hare and Saudi official Yusuf Yassin on 20 December 1952 (*FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1498) weighed on Dulles' mind.

arrangements, or hoped Riyadh would win these disputes. He just wanted to get arbitration back on track, thereby defusing mounting Eastern Arabian tension. In July, NSC Report 155/1 noted Middle Eastern “trends...inimical to Western interests” such as resurgent nationalism, and among other suggestions, recommended ameliorating these ominous patterns by halting deterioration in Saudi-Western relations.¹⁹⁸

Dulles’ plan to transcend earlier problems by imploring Britain to compromise accomplished nothing. While steadfastly blockading Turki, London refused to modify its original terms, and offered little by way of new proposals, arguing that the absence of key British Ministers meant Churchill and his Cabinet could not make important decisions for some time. As the months passed, Saudi authorities grew increasingly frustrated and impatient. Faisal blamed this impasse on an American failure to place sufficient pressure on British officials, and threatened new, forceful attempts to break British interdiction.¹⁹⁹

A repeat of June’s bloody Nuwai incident was the last thing Dulles wanted, but he stood at a dead end. Responsibility for avoiding Anglo-Saudi hostilities rested with the antagonists, yet neither apparently realised the dangers of open conflict. Saudi Arabia made the first significant move toward a breakthrough when in October 1953 it offered to evacuate Turki from Buraimi, in accordance with British demands.²⁰⁰ These new terms did, however, stipulate retention of a small Saudi detachment at the oasis. An outbreak of Anglo-Saudi violence along disputed frontiers a few days later undercut any hope these recent proposals would bear immediate fruit.²⁰¹ As had been the case at Nuwai, the latest hostilities erupted in a blockade context; Trucial Levies and pro-Saudi tribesmen once again jostled for superior position along Buraimi’s periphery. Saudi leaders again

¹⁹⁸ NSC Report 155/1: “US Near East Objectives,” 14 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 145.

¹⁹⁹ Memcon: Prince Faisal and H. Jones, 6 October 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1535.

²⁰⁰ US Embassy London to DOS, 13 October 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1536; DOS:TSDSS Box 84, 20 October 1953.

²⁰¹ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 2 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1539.

appealed to Dulles for American intervention, and arbitration seemed as distant as ever.²⁰²

Trouble in Baynuna: Anglo-Saudi Deadlock Fuels Anglo-American Confrontation

Although Ibn Saud's death in November 1953 shifted the distribution of power in Riyadh, a fundamental consensus remained—no diminution of Saudi diplomatic, military, or political efforts on Eastern Arabian boundary questions. In fact, in a reversal of earlier British positions, the Foreign Office anticipated Ibn Saud's death rendered a diplomatic settlement even more elusive.²⁰³ Negotiations did not resume until the following year, when London accepted with conditions Riyadh's earlier proposal. In tentatively accepting these terms, Eden agreed that small British and Saudi police forces could jointly occupy Buraimi during arbitration, so long as Turki withdrew. At direct IPC request, the Foreign Office also included an audacious clause highlighting British fixation on regional petroleum: if arbitration awarded to Saudi Arabia control of disputed areas, British companies would gain from Riyadh *all concessionary rights* in these zones.²⁰⁴ ARAMCO officials strongly opposed this initiative, and had no intention of surrendering any concessionary rights in Saudi territory.²⁰⁵

Eden's attempt to break the American monopoly on Saudi oil represented an enduring thread of continuity in British foreign policy. By carving out a niche for British commercial interests, London could secure political influence with Saudi Arabia, while diluting the current preponderance of American prestige. Eden thought these trends might alleviate future Anglo-Saudi problems, and also cut ARAMCO down a notch. Although his sentiments found favour with British oil companies, who longed for a piece of Saudi

²⁰² US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 6 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1540. DOS:TSDSS Box 84, 24 December 1953 also references ongoing Anglo-Saudi border clashes.

²⁰³ DOS:TSDSS Box 84, 13 November 1953.

²⁰⁴ PRO CAB 134/1084 OME (54) 2nd Meeting, 25 January 1954; FO to Embassy London, 15 February 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1543.

Arabia's immense and phenomenally lucrative petroleum reserves, Eden apparently failed to realise the paradoxical nature of his policy.²⁰⁶ America's Arabian oil consortium was a *bête noire* to Britain's political and economic elite, since ARAMCO negotiating postures on pricing and distribution arrangements with Riyadh seemed far too liberal. The Foreign Office viewed this generosity as a "constant menace," deplored American "subservience [and] marked compliance" to Saudi commercial propositions.²⁰⁷ ARAMCO had, after all, pioneered the hated 'fifty-fifty' agreement with Saudi Arabia, which subsequently became the Middle Eastern norm. Prevailing thought in London favoured arrangements in which host countries retained far smaller profit shares.²⁰⁸

But dangling an alternative concessionaire in front of Saudi noses—as Eden's arbitration clause essentially did—could only *strengthen* Saudi positions in their negotiations with ARAMCO, thereby allowing Riyadh to wring even more capitulation from American representatives. In fact, periodic Saudi interest regarding IPC concessionary entrée into its territory may well have been little more than a device for gaining leverage vis-à-vis ARAMCO, since Saudi officials made known to American oil executives their apparent inclinations toward possible concessionary realignments.²⁰⁹ As I will explain later, Riyadh did indeed play off British and American commercial interests

²⁰⁵ F. Ohliger to DOS, 9 March 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1547.

²⁰⁶ PRO CAB 134/1084 OME (54) 5th Meeting, 29 January 1954 details IPC & AIOC interest in "continuing operations in disputed areas...after arbitration, *whatever the outcome*." The entire document folder PRO FO 371/104881 deals with British efforts to secure Saudi oil concessions; of particular importance are A.D.M Ross Memorandum, 12 June 1953, PRO FO 371/104881 ES1535/3, and Lord Leathers to W. Churchill, 22 May 1953, PRO FO 371/104881 ES1535/4. Lord Leathers was Minister of Fuel and Power. This idea of horning in on ARAMCO concessions dated at least to the previous year; see FO Memorandum, 11 November 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/17, and UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 17 December 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/18.

²⁰⁷ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 26 April 1952, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/5; PRO CAB 134/1086 OME (55) 1st Conclusions, 6 January 1955, Annex I; R.W. Parkes Memorandum, 15 July 1956; FO Minute, 24 July 1956, PRO FO 371/120782 ES1531/25.

²⁰⁸ D. Greenhill Minute, 9 January 1953, PRO FO 371/98828 ES1051/18; Memcon: R. Funkhouser and H. Beeley, 26 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 287; Memcon: W. B. Smith and R. Scott, and FO Memorandum, 17 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 306.

²⁰⁹ OME Memorandum, PRO CAB 134/1085, ME (54) 4, 28 January 1954 describes Anglo-Saudi contacts regarding IPC or AIOC concessions in Saudi territory.

to force ARAMCO into various compromising positions, which in turn catalysed heightened Anglo-Saudi tensions.

Initially, the State Department did not take seriously Eden's proposition regarding ownership of Eastern Arabian concessions; American officials thought concluding an arbitration agreement transcended secondary concerns such as possession of oil rights, and therefore glossed over Eden's stipulation as a mere sideshow to a more important issue: settling boundaries. Dulles therefore instructed Ambassador George Wadsworth, who had replaced Hare in Jeddah, to support Eden's plan fully. Upon reflection, however, Dulles realised that endorsing Eden's offer implied American support for modifying ARAMCO concessionary arrangements. Since Dulles had no interest in entangling the United States government in problematic concessionary dickering, he specified Washington should *not* sponsor Eden's bid to secure British drilling rights in Saudi Arabia.²¹⁰

While Dulles pondered this latest development, and Saudi Arabia and Britain haggled over arbitration terms, other serious problems emerged. In late February 1954, Muscat and Oman Field Forces launched a major foray into disputed territory. Several hundred troops marched to Fahud in support of IPC subsidiary Petroleum Development Oman, Limited's plans to prospect and drill for oil there.²¹¹ Strong pressure from London, in which the Foreign and Defence Ministries "stressed the [Fahud expedition's] importance and urgency for furthering British interests" compelled Sultan Said to authorise this military expedition. IPC executives, angry at Said's slow pace in organising necessary forces, actively recruited Muscati volunteers to hasten assembly and departure

²¹⁰ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 26 February 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1545; Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 9 March 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1547.

²¹¹ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 22 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1542; DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 16 February 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1545; Henderson, pp. 80, 93.

of this campaign. IPC also underwrote all expeditionary expenses regarding food and logistical support.²¹²

This military expedition had two important consequences. First, it caused a significant rift between Sultan Said and London. In their zeal to establish an oil zone under exclusive British control, IPC employees and MOFF's British officers orchestrated the capture of a number of villages and settlements.²¹³ Since these activities blatantly exceeded rules of engagement Said himself had outlined, he was furious. His anger lingered for months.²¹⁴ Second, to immense Saudi frustration, Eden proclaimed that although Britain had initiated a major oil-prospecting expedition in disputed territory, all such areas remained strictly off-limits for ARAMCO operations, on the grounds that IPC had secured its concession before Eastern Arabian boundary quarrels began. This argument contained elements of truth, although some border disputes had in fact started well before the establishment of British oil concessions.²¹⁵ Eden also insisted that, for purposes of "our prestige and economy generally," exclusive British rights to exploration and drilling persist throughout arbitration.²¹⁶

American officials attempted to persuade Eden to accept a compromise barring *any* petroleum extraction during arbitration, but had little success. When IPC intensified its pace of exploration and surveying to include summer operations—a season in which brutal Arabian heat typically precluded virtually all outdoor activities—King Saud decided to contest Eden's unilateral allocation of oil rights, thus ending the five-year Saudi moratorium on petroleum exploration beyond disputed frontiers. Unfortunately for

²¹² Innes, pp. 45, 56, 72.

²¹³ Henderson, pp. 123-25, 130.

²¹⁴ Innes, p. 91.

²¹⁵ DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 29 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1560. Some, but not all, areas in which IPC conducted exploration and drilling were 'undisputed' at the time that the company secured its concession in 1936. In any event, 'undisputed' is a problematic term, since Eastern Arabia lacked firm boundaries in the 1930s.

Anglo-American relations, ARAMCO became the weapon with which he challenged British mandates. American executives apparently complied because they feared Riyadh might interpret any reluctance as a compelling reason to transfer their concessionary rights to British companies, as Eden had suggested a few months earlier.²¹⁷ When Saud requested that company teams survey Baynuna, at the Qatar peninsula's base and along the disputed area's western edges, the Foreign Office notified both Washington and Riyadh that Britain planned to resist ARAMCO explorations with force if necessary.²¹⁸ Eden justified this policy on the grounds that Saudi guards would probably accompany the ARAMCO teams; commensurate with its ongoing blockade, Britain could not allow Saudi nationals to cross disputed frontiers.²¹⁹

Dulles, fearing conflict over oil rights might sidetrack the slow though tangible progress toward arbitration or, even worse, lead to outright violence between American workers and British soldiers, tried to defuse this incident by recommending ARAMCO defy Saud and avoid disputed areas; if they did go, he urged them to travel unarmed. He also implored Britain to cease on a temporary basis its summer drilling operations, depriving Saudi Arabia of any incentive to dispatch crews across disputed frontiers. He wanted the Saudis and British to stop their dangerous activities, resume negotiations, and establish arbitration terms without delay.²²⁰

²¹⁶ OME Memorandum, PRO CAB 134/1085 ME (54) 4, 28 January 1954; FO to UK Embassy Washington, 15 February 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1543.

²¹⁷ US Embassy London to DOS, 23 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1559; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 11 June 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1567.

²¹⁸ Saud instructed ARAMCO crews to: keep their distance from British oil operations, limit the expedition to four days or less, turn back if British forces confronted them, and avoid any serious oil extraction efforts, such as drilling; see Memcon: S. Lloyd and W. Aldrich, 25 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/239; UK Embassy Washington to FO, 30 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/253; L.A.C. Fry Memorandum and C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, 10 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109835 EA1081/316; M. Buckmaster Minute, 28 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109835 EA1081/334; Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 91.

²¹⁹ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 22 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1542; US Embassy London to DOS, 23 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1559. The first hint that Saud might send ARAMCO crews across disputed frontiers came in early April.

²²⁰ L.A.C. Fry Memorandum, 11 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109832 EA1081/195; DOS to US Embassy London, 22 May 1954; DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 23 May 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1563. Dulles told

The State Department also suggested London avoid resorting to force if ‘hostile’ oil crews did cross disputed boundaries. If all else failed, Dulles thought, Britain could ‘look the other way’ so long as ARAMCO movements had temporal and spatial limits. Since the area in contention was uninhabited desert, British prestige would not suffer, since no one would even know American oil crews had passed through. Dulles also expressed concern over recent British decisions to intensify its Buraimi blockade; the Secretary hoped Britain would refrain from an all-out effort to isolate Turki and force his surrender. He thought British pressure tactics would only backfire as they had in the past, pushing Saudi Arabia into a more belligerent posture. In return for British forbearance, Dulles promised to put concerted pressure on Riyadh to accept British arbitration proposals.²²¹

These calls for moderation were in vain. Neither Saud nor the Foreign Office accepted Dulles’ guidance. Eden refused to curtail PDO/IPC exploration, or rescind standing orders instructing local forces to eject forcibly any Americans who crossed disputed frontiers.²²² The Foreign Office mobilised IPC workers to act as British intelligence agents in the region.²²³ In fact, far from taking Dulles up on his suggestion to ‘ignore’ ARAMCO crews, Britain began fortifying those locations oil workers might transit, and increased reconnaissance patrols there as well. In contrast to American fears that an ARAMCO expedition would be of significant duration, thus increasing risks of an encounter, British officials had the opposite concern: they worried the expedition would be brief and limited, denying British forces an opportunity to confront American workers,

ARAMCO that if outright defiance of Saud proved infeasible, the company should at the very least seek delays before crossing into disputed territory.

²²¹ DOS to US Embassy Ankara, 14 May 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1562; PRO CAB 129 (54) CP 179, 28 May 1954. PRPG to FO, 3 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109832 EA1081/193, PRPG to FO, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/226, and A.I.C. Samuel Memorandum, 11 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109835 EA1081/322 describe blockade intensification, which had Eden’s specific approval.

²²² US Embassy London to DOS, 18 May 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1562.

²²³ FO to PRPG, 21 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/261.

and force their retreat.²²⁴ Privately, the Foreign Office blamed Dulles for this controversy, castigating his stance as “incredibly feeble,” since he did not demand American oil companies limit their activities to undisputed Saudi territory. Bernard Burrows, who had recently replaced Hay as Persian Gulf Political Resident, even suggested that ARAMCO frontier transgressions offered a convenient pretext for launching a full-blown assault on Saudi positions at Buraimi.²²⁵

These decisions came on the heels of an earlier Cabinet conclusion to sustain maximum possible Eastern Arabian force levels, to support British “interest in [Persian Gulf] oil development,” despite the strain such a policy placed on Britain’s operational tempo.²²⁶ Having established forces to deal with any disputed-area ARAMCO activity, the Foreign Office then developed rules of engagement for Trucial Levies and their British officers. These guidelines soon spurred significant debate in Whitehall. Burrows initially suggested that if American crews crossed disputed frontiers, a British political officer, accompanied by Trucial Levies, would confront them, and command that they retreat. If crews did not comply, Levies would open fire on ARAMCO vehicles, thereby preventing additional eastward movement.²²⁷

After considering possible ramifications of the overall military balance if an incident occurred, Burrows subsequently expanded these directives. If British forces enjoyed advantage of numbers, they would ‘manhandle’ Saudi guards, force them into

²²⁴ PRPG to FO, 28 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/244. If British forces failed to contact ARAMCO crews before they left disputed territory, Burrows wanted to launch Royal Air Force sorties and shower American oil workers with leaflets, warning them of their trespass, and of the imminent arrival of ground forces. Burrows’ ‘forward policy’ contradicts Selwyn Lloyd’s admonition to Aldrich that trouble would only ensue if ARAMCO crews “came across British Levy posts.” Their memcon, 25 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/239, has details.

²²⁵ PRPG to FO, 20 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/222; FO Memorandum, 24 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/232; PRPG to FO, 24 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/226. Burrows thought direct British action—such as sending Trucial Levies to Buraimi in force—was “urgently necessary.”

²²⁶ PRO CAB 128 (54) 17th Conclusions, 10 March 1954. At issue was possible withdrawal of an RAF squadron from Sharjah. The Cabinet quickly rejected this proposal.

British vehicles, and drive west, depositing these escorts in undisputed territory. If, however, numerical advantage lay with Saudi personnel, Levy riflemen would take up positions offering advantageous fields of fire. A British political officer would confront ARAMCO crews and warn them to turn back; if compliance did not ensue within five minutes, the Levies were to open fire, targeting ARAMCO radio equipment and water storage containers, unless Saudi personnel responded to Levy volleys with fusillades of their own. In that case, Levies should aim for Saudi escorts themselves. Shortly thereafter, though, Burrows jettisoned his initial requirement to attempt ‘manhandling’ if British troops held numerical superiority. Since he thought hand-to-hand struggling might place British forces at a military disadvantage, he returned to his initial rules of engagement.²²⁸

As would become a familiar pattern over the next few years, a voice of British moderation emerged in the person of Sir Roger Makins, British Ambassador in Washington from 1953. Although he deprecated ARAMCO cooperation with Riyadh as “absurd,” he thought the prospect of British troops opening fire on American nationals also lay beyond the pale. He outlined a compromise in which Trucial Levies might conveniently locate American crews a few days *after* they arrived, rather than doing so immediately, and order them to leave at that point. This arrangement might satisfy British and Saudi sensibilities; Riyadh would demonstrate that Eden’s unilateral proclamations regarding who could and could not operate in disputed areas did not represent the final word, while allowing Whitehall to show its resolve regarding retention of some degree of frontier authority. Makins badly misjudged prevailing British attitudes. The Foreign Office rejected his suggestion out of hand since the Americans “[are] so obviously...wrong.” The only solution, Makins’ superiors warned, would be for United

²²⁷ PRPG to FO, 20 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/222.

States authorities to force Saudi Arabia into abandoning its “unjustified and retrograde” aspirations of conducting disputed-area oil operations.²²⁹

A striking aspect of British policy regarding ARAMCO frontier activity is that Eden and the Foreign Office *knew* Saudi Arabia had by far the strongest claim to western Baynuna, that part of the disputed zone where American crews planned to enter. Local tribes, the Manasir and the Murra, showed almost exclusive loyalty to Riyadh. While publicly asserting superior Abu Dhabi rights, the Foreign Office privately characterised these claims as “weak,” acknowledging impartial arbitration would almost certainly grant the area to Saudi Arabia. Abu Dhabi’s presence there was all of three months old.²³⁰

Yet the fragility of British claims did not stop Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ivone Kirkpatrick from unleashing a fiery verbal onslaught against Walton Butterworth and other American diplomats, in which Kirkpatrick denied Saudi Arabia had rights to *any* disputed territory at all. Kirkpatrick, who shared Eden’s ‘Munich syndrome’, branded Saudi claims “Hitlerian” and, in a revealing miscue, informed Butterworth British forces and their allies would “turn back and in the last resort fire upon ARAMCO [crews] if they entered *Saudi* territory.” He asserted that bribing local tribes constituted the sole ARAMCO objective in crossing disputed frontiers, maintaining that British companies had discovered oil and would shortly begin drilling regardless of consequences.²³¹ These attitudes caused significant consternation in Washington.²³²

²²⁸ PRPG to Political Agency Dubai; PRPG to FO, 26 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/237.

²²⁹ UK Embassy Washington to FO; FO to UK Embassy Washington, 25 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/234.

²³⁰ FO Memo, 10 November 1952, PRO FO 371/98383 EA1084/401; L.A.C. Fry Memorandum and C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, 10 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109835 EA1081/316; M. Buckmaster Minute, 28 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109835 EA1081/334; Burrows, p. 99. Apparently recent IPC activities near Baynuna prompted Abu Dhabi’s attempt to establish a political presence there in Spring 1954.

²³¹ Memcon: I. Kirkpatrick, H. Hoover, and W. Butterworth, 24 May 1954. Embassy London to DOS, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1564 contains the American account; PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/233 has Kirkpatrick’s record.

²³² Memcon: T. Duce and H. Byroade, 27 May 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 346.

Soon after these desultory exchanges, Churchill learned of Foreign Office plans to use firepower if necessary in the event of an American excursion. Although the Cabinet approved Burrows' recommendations regarding rules for engaging American convoys, Churchill rescinded them.²³³ The Prime Minister deplored the prospect of American civilians caught in the cross-fire of an Anglo-Saudi shoot-out; he wanted to avoid a fire fight, and directed Burrows' erstwhile suggestion for 'manhandling' constitute the maximum level of force for British soldiers. In contrast to Eden, Churchill feared subordinating broader issues of Anglo-American cooperation beneath British territorial desiderata. Although Churchill's caution caused much disappointment in Bahrain and the Foreign Office, Burrows issued new instructions to his subordinates, forbidding them to open fire on ARAMCO convoys, although they would still shadow American workers who crossed Eden's *ne plus ultra*.²³⁴

This intra-governmental struggle over directives regarding acceptable levels of force entered a temporary lull when American crews failed to arrive when London expected. Direct State Department intervention convinced ARAMCO to fight successfully for a two-day delay; Dulles thought an expedition moratorium would give London and Washington additional time to defuse boundary tensions. The longer ARAMCO could drag out a delay, the greater was Dulles' chance to secure an agreement outlining which companies, and under what conditions, could operate in disputed Eastern

²³³ S. Lloyd to PM, 24 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/231A; PRO CAB 129 (54) CP 179, 28 May 1954; PM to Foreign Secretary, 28 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/231B.

²³⁴ PM to FO; FO to PRPG, 31 May 1954; PRPG to Political Agent Dubai, 1 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/256. Burrows' anger at Churchill's prohibition of firearms usage is in PRPG to FO, 1 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/258. Burrows remarked that the Prime Minister's cautious policy might result in large-scale ARAMCO operations in disputed areas. The Foreign Office disagreed with, and later tried to ignore, Churchill's directive; see L.A.C. Fry Memorandum, 2 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/257 and *Descent*, 3 June 1954, p. 217. Petersen discusses disparate perceptions on the part of Churchill and Eden regarding Eastern Arabian territorial issues.

Arabian territory. Since a settlement of this sort might offset hostilities, Dulles and his subordinates fought hard for further postponements.²³⁵

Riyadh finally lost patience and sent American crews across the frontier on May 30th, 1954. Initial British intelligence reports indicated a small convoy—a dozen workers and a few vehicles—but these estimates erred.²³⁶ This party actually numbered in the hundreds, including many vehicles with radio equipment and other logistical support.²³⁷ The convoy's size basically invalidated Churchill's preference for 'manhandling', giving British officials an opportunity to interpret his orders in a way that might restore their own desired rules of engagement: authorisation to open fire if necessary. Such semantic gamesmanship was difficult, since Churchill had been so direct in his prohibition of firepower, but the Foreign Office tried anyway, creatively speculating on what the Prime Minister had actually 'meant' to say when he forbade firearms.²³⁸ Minister of State Selwyn Lloyd appealed directly to Churchill, begging that British forces gain authority to "apply the ultimate sanction" against these ARAMCO interlopers in the interest of protecting "our whole Trucial Coast position." Churchill's crisp and unambiguous reply left no doubt he intended to stand by his original formulation:

It is very easy to write about shooting the wheel of the motor car and not injuring the American inside. Bullets are very rarely accurately directed. It would be a very unfortunate moment for the British to shoot an American citizen, even if his own government had asked him not to go where he had gone. A robust attitude of mind is much to be commended, but it should be accompanied by a sense of proportion.²³⁹

²³⁵ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 27 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/244; PRO CAB 129 (54) CP 179, 28 May 1954; DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 29 May 1954; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 31 May 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1565. Apparently, bad weather also compelled delay. DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 7 June 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1566 discusses ARAMCO influence in expedition timing (and motivation). At that point, Dulles suspected that perhaps ARAMCO's role was less passive than company executives had suggested.

²³⁶ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 30 May 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/252.

²³⁷ PRPG to FO, 1 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/259.

²³⁸ L.A.C. Fry Memorandum, 2 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109833 EA1081/257; *Descent*, 3 June 1954, p. 217.

²³⁹ S. Lloyd to W. Churchill; W. Churchill to S. Lloyd, 2 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109834 EA1081/171.

Although Churchill's prohibition on force stood, Burrows wanted British personnel to intercept ARAMCO crews immediately. When difficult terrain and long distances hampered the Levies' overland progress, Burrows arranged for sealift to speed their travel, authorising Trucial Levies to undertake amphibious landings immediately east of the Qatar peninsula.²⁴⁰ He also dispatched RAF airplanes to drop leaflets on ARAMCO workers, warning of their trespass into Abu Dhabi territory.²⁴¹

The Foreign Secretary picked up where Lloyd left off, imploring Churchill to grant permission to open fire. Eden tried to rally the Cabinet behind him, urging assembled Ministers to authorise the use of firearms. He reminded the Cabinet of the "very substantial amounts of oil" at stake, which meant preventing ARAMCO from establishing any claim to disputed Eastern Arabian areas represented a "vital British interest." In the face of this revolt, Churchill employed a wily stratagem to outflank his Ministerial opposition. He kept Eden at bay by agreeing to rescind his 'no-shoot' order, although he stipulated firing could commence *only* after British forces secured numerical superiority. Presumably, transporting sufficient manpower to remote locations required several days, during which time ARAMCO crews would probably depart. Eden countered by accepting this requirement, so long as Britain avoided any delay in evicting American workers. A plan to use airborne troops represented Eden's ace in the hole in his struggle with Churchill. These forces could reach American crews almost immediately and provide Britain with numerical advantage, thus establishing on acceptable terms the

²⁴⁰ Mann, p. 46.

²⁴¹ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 6 June 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1566. ARAMCO retorted with its own note, informing London that Saudi Arabia rejected British border claims in Baynuna.

confrontation he desired.²⁴² Meanwhile, the main British force continued overland, heading for Baynuna, along the disputed area's western edges.²⁴³

Although all oil workers withdrew on June 8th, before Levy soldiers could make contact, the Foreign Office advocated continuing these deployments, as a show of force to any who might question British resolve. The arrival of a large British expedition would leave locals, Saudis, and Americans in no doubt that London would not tolerate interlopers, even along the ragged fringe of Britain's boundary claims.²⁴⁴

Diplomatic Success in Eastern Arabia

Despite this close call at Baynuna, in which Churchill averted a direct Anglo-Saudi clash by the narrowest of margins, an arbitration agreement regarding Buraimi's future appeared to be within reach as summer progressed.²⁴⁵ By mid-summer, only one real obstacle to joint signature of arbitration guidelines remained: the basis on which arbitrators should assess conflicting claims to Eastern Arabian territory. Since British clients had long enjoyed physical proximity to Buraimi and its immediate environs, while Saudi Arabia had not, London hoped arbitrators would focus on historical boundaries.²⁴⁶ Riyadh, by contrast, sought to emphasise the importance of current political orientations in and around Buraimi, not only regarding local sheikhs and their subjects, but also with respect to tribes who periodically visited the oasis, such as the al Manasir, al Awamir, al Murra, and al Manahil. A compromise in which legal and political factors received approximately equal legal weight bridged this gap between British and Saudi objectives.

These paradoxical trends—extreme political tension along disputed Arabian frontiers, yet significant progress toward consummation of arbitration arrangements—

²⁴² PRPG to FO, 3 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109834 EA1081/270; PRO CAB 128 (54) 39th Conclusions, 5 June 1954; A. Eden Minute, 5 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109834 EA1081/270.

²⁴³ US Embassy London to DOS, 8 June 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1566.

²⁴⁴ *Descent*, 8 June 1954, p. 218; FO to PRPG, 9 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109834 EA1081/298.

²⁴⁵ *Descent*, 9 June & 14 July 1954, pp. 218, 224; DOS:TSDSS Box 86, 16 July 1954.

sprang from several contemporary developments, including breakthroughs on a petroleum settlement in Iran. Even after Mossadegh's overthrow the previous summer, agonising negotiations regarding the fate of Iranian oil persisted interminably, but in Spring 1954 a series of thinly-veiled American threats to undermine AIOC positions if stalemate continued compelled London to acquiesce in a solution acceptable to all parties. Although a final Iranian settlement did not emerge until October 1954, by late July all signs indicated some resolution was very nearly at hand. Thus, the Churchill Cabinet's primary mode of assistance for AIOC's negotiating stance—embargoing Iranian oil, and large increases in production elsewhere to offset any subsequent deficiencies—had run its course. Britain accordingly gained latitude regarding disposition of other petroleum-rich areas.²⁴⁷

An additional development pushing rival territorial claimants toward an agreement related to growing controversy over British disputed-area blockades. Riyadh applied intense pressure in New York for creation of a United Nations investigatory committee to inquire about the effect of food and water interdiction on villagers residing in and near Buraimi. The danger of outside observation caused serious Foreign Office consternation—although the squalor at Buraimi did not result exclusively from British actions, if word spread concerning appalling oasis conditions, a public relations disaster might ensue. Concluding an arbitration agreement represented an attractive way to outflank this threat.²⁴⁸ For its part, Saudi Arabia no doubt felt the blockade's bite and feared further delay in a settlement might make its Buraimi positions untenable.

²⁴⁶ Kelly, "Sovereignty."

²⁴⁷ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy London, 17 March 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 436, J.F. Dulles to US Embassy London, 24 May 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 464, *Descent*, 17 March 1954, p. 150, and Goode, p. 144 describe American threats to Britain; *Descent*, 8 June, 14 & 30 July 1954, pp. 218, 224, 235 discuss progress on an Iranian oil settlement. Yergin, pp. 464-66 analyzes British and AIOC negotiating tactics.

²⁴⁸ R.C. Blackham Memorandum, 3 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109834 EA1081/267; PRPG to FO, 12 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109834 EA1081/291.

Typically, Saudi leaders responded unfavourably to British coercive tactics—they usually answered force with force—but in this particular instance, pressure may actually have yielded some benefits for London. Although Riyadh was not exactly enthusiastic about the arbitration process, an inglorious westward retreat posed even gloomier prospects.

In spite of some last-minute snags that threatened to undercut all negotiating progress to date, Saudi Arabia and Britain agreed to arbitration terms on July 30th, 1954, two and a half years after the Dammam conference collapsed.²⁴⁹ The intervening thirty months had seen rapid and violent changes along disputed Eastern Arabian frontiers. Against American advice, both Riyadh and London had orchestrated significant reinforcement efforts, attempting to strengthen their respective positions. Armed clashes erupted, and men died, when these antagonists subsequently jockeyed for regional supremacy. At times, the Western edifice in the Arabian Peninsula seemed near collapse, as Saudi Arabia, Britain, and the United States engaged in a long series of mutual threats, warnings, challenges and ultimatums. In fact, shortly before conclusion of arbitration terms, Dulles noted Saudi-American relations faced “considerable jeopardy.”²⁵⁰ This late-July arbitration agreement appeared to end Anglo-Saudi animosity on terms that might dampen State Department anxieties, but what seemed an important milestone for peace, and a singular diplomatic triumph, in fact represented a mere hiatus. Renewed hostilities one year later marked an escalation to new and more dangerous levels of confrontation.

²⁴⁹ *Descent*, 19 & 30 July 1954, pp. 226, 235; Treaty Series no. 65 (1954) Cmd. 9272: ‘Arbitration Agreement between the United Kingdom Government and the Saudi Arabian Government,’ 30 July 1954; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 31 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1570.

²⁵⁰ J.F. Dulles to G. Allen, 26 July 1954, GAP Box 3.

Chapter Two

Challenges in Middle Eastern Multilateral Security, 1953-55

Middle Eastern Strategic Assumptions in the Eisenhower Administration

When Eisenhower entered the White House in 1953, he and Dulles re-evaluated Middle Eastern strategy for the United States within a larger containment paradigm.¹ Western policymakers had struggled to resolve regional defence issues well before Eisenhower took office, but this study will not attempt to trace in detail the myriad plans and programmes London and Washington suggested to deal with these complex questions during Truman's Presidency.² A few issues are noteworthy, however.

First, the United States government recognised the region's importance in light of its tremendous oil reserves.³ Second, State Department officials had for years noted regional economic and political deterioration, but for several reasons proved unable to develop any concrete plans to halt this unfavourable erosion.⁴ Had direct Communist attack loomed, straightforward solutions may have been manifest, but National Security Council estimates assessed the probability of "aggressive [Soviet] military action" as relatively low, particularly once global tension linked to the outbreak of full-scale hostilities in Korea had subsided to some extent.⁵ Instead, regional problems assumed more subtle forms: nascent nationalism, social discontent and economic stagnation.⁶

¹ Eisenhower, *Peace*, pp. 22-23 briefly describes the origins and evolution of Eisenhower's Middle Eastern strategy.

² FO Memorandum, 19 June 1953, *BDEEP:EDME III* no. 403 summarises Western security initiatives before the Eisenhower Presidency, including a Middle East Command and Middle East Defence Organisation. Cabinet Memorandum, 18 June 1952, *BDEEP:CG&EE* no. 3 is also useful. Cohen, Chapter 8; Devereaux, Chapter 2; Persson, Chapter 3; Hahn, "Containment" and *Egypt*, pp. 109-116 and 144-153; Takeyh, "Pan-Arabism" pp. 59-70; Podeh, *Quest*, Chapter 2; and Campbell, Chapter 4 offer additional background.

³ MECM Conference Conclusions, 21 February 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 71; GAOH; REOH; Cohen, pp. 35-37.

⁴ D. Acheson to DOD, 27 January 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 21.

⁵ NSC Study: "Middle East Defense," 27 December 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 257. Painter, p. 167 and Hahn, *Strategy*, pp. 93, 102, and 109 discuss American anxieties regarding Middle Eastern security immediately following the outbreak of war in Korea.

⁶ NSC Study, 27 December 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 257. NSC Study 155/1: "United States Objectives With Respect to the Near East", 14 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 145 reached similar conclusions,

Furthermore, existing commitments stretched American resources to their limits; the Joint Chiefs of Staff in particular proved highly reluctant to shoulder any new burdens, even those of a straightforward military variety.⁷ An observable trend in the early 1950s was State-Defense tension about accepting new Middle Eastern responsibilities, as the former pushed for heightened involvement while the latter sought to forestall any expanded commitments.⁸

Another problematic issue hinged upon regional British prerogatives, which Britain and the United States had codified in 1947 and 1948.⁹ Although some American officials had serious questions about British policies, and explicitly rejected a ‘spheres of influence’ division of the Middle East, on balance Washington respected its ally’s primacy and avoided undue intrusion. The United States planned to establish entrée slowly and patiently to avoid destabilisation or confusion.¹⁰ Rather than publicly confronting or challenging Britain, American diplomats quietly suggested to British officials that they avoid “old-fashioned power politics,” recommending implementation of political, economic and social reform instead.¹¹ Washington obviously needed to reconcile two disparate objectives: “keep[ing] the support and friendship of rising

demonstrating strategic continuity between the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. On a superficial level, DOS Memorandum, 16 April 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 69 weights Soviet military aggression and indigenous political and socioeconomic upheaval equally in terms of their respective threats to Western interests, but the bulk of this memorandum actually deals with the latter issue. See also Gendzier; Freiberger, p. 25.

⁷ DOS and JCS Planning Session, 2 May 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* pp. 113-19.

⁸ D. Acheson to DOD, 27 January 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 21; DOS and JCS Planning Session, 18 June 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 76; Hahn, *Egypt*, p. 111; Cohen, pp. 239, 245-53.

⁹ Takeyh, “Pan-Arabism,” pp. 46-50 describes the Anglo-American “Pentagon Talks” delineating Middle Eastern roles and responsibilities.

¹⁰ Axelgard, p. 81; DOS Memorandum, 12 February 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 48; NSC Staff Study, 14 March 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 99; Memcon: DOS and FO representatives, 2 April 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 105. Embassy Tehran to DOS, 2 January 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 140 demonstrates American disappointment with British policies, particularly among diplomats serving at US Embassy Tehran.

¹¹ DOS Position Paper: “Iraq Policy Statement”, 9 November 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 651; Memcon: DOS and FO representatives, 17 May 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 134; Embassy Ankara to DOS, 31 March 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 66.

nationalism...without undermining legitimate local positions of our North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies.”¹²

In light of its economic reliance on the Hashemite-Gulf Arch, London showed no interest in relinquishing Middle Eastern hegemony.¹³ British authorities ridiculed American efforts to accommodate the area’s nationalism,¹⁴ and strategic considerations excluded any ‘scuttle.’ Just as had been the case before World War Two—when RAF assets accelerated Hashemite ‘state-building’ by attacking various dissident groups—British Arch-based power projection capabilities still constituted an indispensable bulwark for defending and extending regional British interests. For example, in 1945-46 the RAF assisted Iraqi subjugation of Kurdish separatists, thus protecting Hashemite national unity while securing valuable oil deposits in northern Iraq, and in 1947 London deployed troops to Shaiba for possible action at Abadan against Iranian workers.¹⁵ Additionally, in their planning for possible campaigns (Operation *Buccaneer*) in Iran during the AIOC crisis, British military experts designated Habbaniyah and Shaiba as key staging areas.¹⁶ American political and military leaders, however, jointly concluded that in the long run, Washington simply had to assume greater regional leadership and responsibilities due to the ultimate untenability of British positions there. As Britain’s presence continued to hemorrhage, Moscow would ease into the Middle East by stages if American power did not fill the resulting void.¹⁷

¹² H. Hoskins Memorandum, 7 April 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 67; Embassy Washington to FO, 6 October 1952, *BDEEP:CG&EE I* no. 101. See also Bartlett, pp. 57, 78-79.

¹³ DOS Paper WFM T-3/1a, 6 September 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 176.

¹⁴ A. Kirkbride Memorandum, 3 July 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 410.

¹⁵ Lukitz, *Iraq*, pp. 35, 76, 127; Khadduri, p. 257.

¹⁶ Cabinet Paper, 20 July 1951, *BDEEP:LG&EE* no. 37. Louis, *Empire*, pp. 673-676 outlines *Buccaneer*.

¹⁷ DOS PPS Memorandum, 21 May 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 74; DOS Memorandum, 25 July 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 81; Memcon: H. Truman and H. Byroade, 8 August 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 82; Memcon: O. Bradley and P. Nitze, 1 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 90. Thacher, p. 63 describes American assumptions regarding British Middle Eastern weakness. See also Carlton, p. 304.

Finally, the State Department assumed security-based integration among Middle Eastern states could not ensue unless external pressure and inducements pushed them toward cooperation.¹⁸ In this context, United States participation played a crucial role in leavening Britain's imperialist reputation, American officials thought. If Washington stayed in the background, Arab nationalists would reject any updated regional defence arrangements stipulating cooperation with Western powers.¹⁹ This last assumption almost certainly overestimated American reserves of Middle Eastern goodwill.

Upon assuming office in 1953, the new Administration generally accepted these assessments regarding regional strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Unlike their predecessors, however, Eisenhower and Dulles decided to move assertively, seeking to consolidate wide-ranging and inchoate State and Defense Department observations into a framework for bolstering American strategy. Their basic idea—which began coalescing even before Dulles' much-publicised Middle Eastern trip in late Spring 1953—was relatively simple, although execution became problematic as various forces beset, eroded, and undercut United States initiatives.²⁰ American mistakes and faulty assumptions amplified these destructive trends.

To enhance containment and offset the rising tide of “open and united hostility” American officials had observed in the Middle East, Dulles wanted to diffuse aid across the region.²¹ Commensurate with Eisenhower’s view that the United States should

¹⁸ DOS and JCS Planning Session, 30 January 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* pp. 27-42.

¹⁹ NISE-23: “Prospects for an Inclusive Middle Eastern Defense Organization” 17 March 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 65.

²⁰ NSC Report 155/1, 14 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 145, the blueprint for the Eisenhower Administration’s Middle Eastern strategy, encapsulates the Eisenhower/Dulles approach. See also Persson, pp. 114-18.

²¹ J.F. Dulles to D. Eisenhower, 17 May 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 31 elaborates American fears that growing Arab antagonism toward the West generated Soviet opportunities unless the Free World offset these trends with moral and material support. Persson, p. 157 discusses in a general way Dulles’ strategies for Middle Eastern aid allocation and distribution. Project Solarium of mid-1953 codified Eisenhower’s commitment to containment as a fundamental strategy; AGOH and Bowie, *Peace*, Chapter Eight provide valuable analysis.

wage—and win—its struggle with the Soviet Union through economic and political means, American assistance could engender profound psychological advantages for the West vis-à-vis Moscow, while creating conditions for long-term regional strength. However, Dulles understood he could only proffer this aid within existing political constraints.²² Deeply-rooted regional rivalries such as the Indo-Pakistani dispute²³ and ongoing Arab-Israeli tensions meant Washington simply could not toss money and weaponry into the area helter-skelter.²⁴ Such a programme would prove domestically unsustainable—Israel's American supporters, for instance, would raise intense opposition—and strategically self-defeating, since unequal aid allocation would alienate those who were disadvantaged, thus opening weaknesses in the containment structure.²⁵ By employing Cold War rhetoric, Dulles planned to commence aid distribution in ways that insulated American assistance from regional controversies.²⁶

For purposes of credibility, Dulles needed to link aid into a larger geopolitical framework: if constituencies lobbied against American aid programmes, the State Department could defuse controversy by noting its efforts aimed strictly against Soviet

²² Memcon: J.F. Dulles and Mutual Security Program Representatives, 25 October 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 X* no. 26 outlines the primacy of foreign aid; 269th NSC Meeting, 8 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 X* no. 13 discusses the role of political constraints on this aid. AGI and AGOH elaborate on the Eisenhower/Dulles Middle Eastern and global strategy.

²³ McMahon, “South Asia” describes how the Indo-Pakistani dispute complicated American strategic planning.

²⁴ US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 11 September 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 64. Raleigh describes “controversial, unbalancing, and destabilising” effects American leaders anticipated if they provided Middle Eastern aid without adequate ‘cover.’ Lesch, *Syria*, p. 46, concludes that by “trying to delink the Arab world and its various quagmires from the strategic goals of a regional defense system, Dulles actually succeeded in opening the door for the Soviet Union in the Arab heartland.” This observation has merit, although I contend that American efforts at delinkage *per se* did not provide Soviet entrée; this instead emerged from the very act of assembling a regional defence system. Theoretically, delinkage was a sound idea, although nearly impossible to execute in practice.

²⁵ DOS Memorandum, 15 October 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 155 and US Embassy New Delhi to DOS, 19 October 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 156 are exemplars of contradictory pressures on American policy. See also Bowie, *Peace*, pp. 218-19.

²⁶ J.F. Dulles to US Embassies Ankara and Islamabad, 24 & 29 December 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* nos. 164 and 165 are but two examples of Dulles’ thinking along these lines. H. Byroade Speech, 5 March 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 434 explicitly outlines State Department emphasis on “purely defensive” (i.e., containment-oriented) regional security arrangements to justify American aid.

threats, and had as their object containment fortification.²⁷ Along these lines, building a ‘Northern Tier’ agglomeration of states made the most sense not only because this grouping—which Dulles tentatively envisioned as Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey—was proximate to Soviet territory, but also because it stood relatively (though not wholly) distant from controversies that might derail United States assistance.²⁸ Although in the medium or long run—after aid had improved the region’s political climate—Dulles may have intended to forge a binding Middle Eastern alliance along North Atlantic Treaty Organisation lines, his short-run expectations were less grandiose. He sought a relatively simple and informal grouping and, since neither he nor Eisenhower expected Moscow to initiate global war,²⁹ such arrangements seemed entirely adequate from a military perspective.³⁰ As a National Security Council Report later noted, “creating [Middle Eastern] strength and self-reliance, regardless of whether any formal link to the West is established at this time, will be an important impediment to Soviet cold war activities, including subversion.”³¹

Dulles’ Spring 1953 Middle Eastern tour reinforced these sentiments in dramatic fashion. Upon returning to Washington, he unequivocally rejected previous Western

²⁷ Memcon: J. F. Dulles and R. Makins, 7 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 70 and J.F. Dulles to Embassy Baghdad, 13 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 293 elaborate this idea in explicit fashion. Memcon: D. Eisenhower, J.F. Dulles, and C. Wilson, 5 January 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 167 shows that Eisenhower concurred with his Secretary’s assessment regarding this policy.

²⁸ As Dulles told Eden on one occasion, Washington could “help [states possessing] no common border with Israel, but rendering assistance to Arab states contiguous to Israel was quite a different matter.” See J.F. Dulles to DOS, 24 February 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 29.

²⁹ Early in his Presidency, Eisenhower complained to his Assistant for National Security Affairs Robert Cutler that “all these [NSC] fellows worry so much about what we will do when the Russians attack...well, I do not believe for a second they will ever attack.” (Quoted in Immerman, “Confessions.”)

³⁰ RBI; DOS Position Paper: “Middle East Defense”, 11 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 56; NSC 155/1, 14 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 145; Bowie, *Peace*, p. 47. US Embassy Ankara to DOS, 2 December 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 162, illustrates that Dulles’ subordinates also preferred loose, flexible guidelines instead of rigidity, although the JCS on occasion favoured more formal arrangements. Eden, p. 220 contains an interesting counterpoint, noting his desire that multilateral agreements evolve into a “North Atlantic Treaty Organisation of the area.” Ashton, *Problem*, pp. 37-38 contends that American leaders sought binding structures, whereas British officials favoured informality. Raymond Hare, a high-ranking American diplomat during Eisenhower’s Presidency, suggests that Dulles may have initially inclined toward formal arrangements, but soon shed this tendency (RHOH/II).

³¹ NSC Statement of US Objectives and Policies in the Near East, 23 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 219.

plans, such as a four- or seven-power Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO) or Middle East Command (MEC), arranged to allocate an additional \$100 million in regional assistance despite a generally constrictive trend in American foreign aid, and emphasised the paramountcy of flexibility and native initiatives for regional security arrangements.³² Dulles' plan for using this Northern Tier concept to provide political cover for regional assistance represented but one in a series of related schemes. Two initiatives from 1950, the ARAMCO 'golden gimmick' and the Anglo-French-American Tripartite Declaration, provided convenient models for outflanking any congressional criticism regarding assistance for Arab states, in the former case through secrecy and in the latter by diversionary tactics.³³ While the Northern Tier differed in scope and substance from these earlier initiatives, its *intent* showed distinct parallels with them.

On the theory that influence follows aid, another long-run goal of Dulles' plan for Middle Eastern assistance was to enhance American regional leverage, thus facilitating United States pressure on quarrelling states therein to consummate amicable and multilateral settlements.³⁴ Once again, containment figured prominently in Dulles' calculations, as he knew lingering instability such as the Arab-Israeli conflict would benefit Moscow. Conversely, prompt resolutions hamstrung Soviet opportunism.

Dulles' plan to make defence arrangements appear indigenous in origination constituted a final aspect of his Middle Eastern blueprint. Unlike his predecessors in the

³² FO Memorandum, 19 June 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 403; J.F. Dulles to C. Wilson, 26 June 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 142; 153rd NSC Meeting, 9 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 144; Persson, p. 120. Schorr, Chapter Three analyzes Dulles' Middle Eastern tour, while Burton, *Trade*, pp. 14-15 describes a general shift in emphasis away from foreign aid early in Eisenhower's Presidency.

³³ Hahn, *Egypt*, pp. 99-100 describes the Tripartite Declaration as a mechanism for "reconciling strategic interests with congressional demands." Painter, p. 171 and Anderson, "Fifty-Fifty" pp. 153-54 discuss ARAMCO's 'golden gimmick.'

³⁴ FWOH; Memcon: J.F. Dulles, P. Hart, and J. Blaustein, 12 May 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 822; UK-US Foreign Ministers' Conference, 11 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 V* p. 1631; J. Jernegan to L. Henderson, 9 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 157; Memcon: H. Byroade, A. Eban, M. Dayan, 16 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 842. As Byroade noted, American regional assistance represented an "attempt to

Truman Administration, he believed—perhaps correctly, perhaps not—exogenous involvement might unleash self-destructive tendencies within any regional coalition.³⁵

Briefly then, Dulles' Northern Tier concept sought to dispense aid opportunistically by shielding American assistance under broader Cold War auspices.

Constructing the Northern Tier: Summer 1953-Winter 1955

The first opportunity to advance this scheme appeared in June 1953, when Egypt suggested basing regional defence on the Arab Collective Security Pact (ACSP), an Arab League auxiliary. Dulles rejected this plan; using ACSP did not fit his regional strategy.

Freiberger asserts Dulles opposed using ACSP because he did not want to support a coalition with 'neutralist' overtones.³⁶ While this may be true, a larger factor compelling Dulles' rejection hinged on domestic contexts. Linked as ACSP was, via its Arab League connections, to inveterate anti-Zionism, Dulles could hardly hope to make it the centerpiece for a large-scale American aid network. He needed a more 'politically desirable' system. A candidate fitting this criterion soon appeared along the Northern Tier's eastern and western termini. Turkish and Pakistani officials welcomed a pro-Western grouping, accepted Dulles' fundamental strategic assumptions, and appeared willing to move forward on their own initiative.³⁷ Ankara, in fact, pressed so strongly for immediate initiation of security arrangements that Washington had to urge patience.³⁸ Not long after an Anglo-American coup restored the Shah to power in Iran, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded favourable circumstances had arrived—the United States

increase [United States] influence...as a prerequisite to encouraging [Arab-Israeli peace] arrangements." See also Hobbs, p. 42.

³⁵ J.F. Dulles to W.B. Smith, 13 May 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 7; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and A. Menderes, 2 June 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 VIII* no. 487.

³⁶ Freiberger, p. 85. Podeh, *Quest*, pp. 47-48 provides useful ACSP background.

³⁷ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and M. Ali, 23 & 24 May 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* nos. 42 and 47; 147th NSC Meeting, 1 June 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 137; US Embassy Ankara to DOS, 17 September 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 152; Cohen, p. 318.

³⁸ US Embassy Ankara to DOS, 18 June 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 141.

should secretly sponsor some form of Northern Tier defence coalition so long as regional powers assumed most responsibility for initiation and execution.³⁹

At behind-the-scenes American urging, Turkey and Pakistan discussed various ‘indigenous’ security arrangements, but progress proved difficult for a number of reasons, including widely varying perspectives on timing and scope.⁴⁰ Foreign Office coolness toward Turko-Pakistani bilateral ties along the lines Dulles had suggested—especially if Iraqi participation seemed probable—also hampered advancement. Although Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff exhibited at least lukewarm support for Northern Tier-based political arrangements, Eden rejected American emphasis on indigenousness, and sought greater British involvement in regional defence planning, no doubt with an eye on the Hashemite-Gulf Arch.⁴¹

Coincidental with Eisenhower’s assumption of presidential power, and as the culmination of trends underway for several years, Eden articulated a decisive strategic shift *toward* the Arch, and *away* from other British regional positions, particularly Egypt. He noted “our limited resources [make] it essential to concentrate on points where our vital strategic needs or necessities of our economic life are at stake...our present Canal Zone forces [cannot] support our peace-time interests elsewhere in the Middle East.”⁴² The Hashemite-Gulf Arch represented a confluence of “vital strategic needs” and “necessities of [British] economic life.” In light of increasing Arch importance, Foreign Office authorities thought Middle Eastern security coalitions, particularly those involving Iraq, “might, in the long run, be against our interests.” Assuring that any such

³⁹ JCS Memorandum to C. Wilson, 10 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 159.

⁴⁰ H. Byroade to W.B. Smith, 3 February 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 189; DOS to US Embassy Tehran, 13 February 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 192.

⁴¹ Memcon: J.W. Jernegan and H. Beeley, 6 January 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 168; DOS:TSDSS Box 84, 7 January 1954; US Embassy Ankara to DOS, 25 January 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 177; Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 92; Persson, p. 129; Devereaux, p. 159.

arrangements would neither allow American influence to undermine Britain's privileged Mesopotamian position, nor destabilise Old Gang power by stimulating Iraqi nationalism, spurred particular concern in Whitehall.⁴³

Iraq challenged Anglo-American relations not only within narrow bounds of Turko-Pakistani regional defense arrangements, but on broader Middle Eastern security issues as well. United States officials had, over the past few years, questioned with increasing frequency Anglo-Iraqi connections, which at best appeared antiquated and irrelevant, and at times seemed overtly destabilising. Particularly anachronistic, thought American diplomats in Baghdad, were treaty provisions stipulating only British nationals enjoyed license to advise the Iraqi government on political, military, and socioeconomic issues.⁴⁴ A long-standing IPC pattern of paying abnormally low royalty rates to Baghdad posed another problem; American officials thought such parsimony cultivated resentment.⁴⁵ Updated Iraqi-IPC agreements in early 1952 alleviated this situation somewhat, but obvious challenges remained.⁴⁶

Most notably, Churchill's Cabinet realised British treaty relations with Baghdad expired within a matter of years. As yet the Foreign Office had no concrete plan for renewing these arrangements, although Britain could rest comfortably in its knowledge that Anglo-Iraqi intimacy faced little immediate danger so long as Nuri retained his political stranglehold. Recognition that British impatience had in 1948 very nearly

⁴² A. Eden Cabinet Paper, 16 February 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME II* no. 361. Ralph Stevenson, British Ambassador in Egypt, had long advocated such a shift (UK Embassy Cairo to A. Eden, 25 February 1952, *BDEEP:E&DME II* no. 277).

⁴³ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 24 February 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 495; UK Embassy Ankara to FO, 26 March 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 506; P.S. Falla Memorandum, 10 April 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 508; FO Memorandum, 30 April 1954, PRO FO 371/110995 VQ1023/3.

⁴⁴ Khadduri, p. 319 describes these provisions.

⁴⁵ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 30 January 1950, *FRUS 1950 V* p. 39; Third Progress Report on NSC Paper 47/2, 26 January 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 20; MECM Conference Conclusions, 21 February 1951, *FRUS 1951 V* p. 71.

⁴⁶ Silverfarb, "Revision" outlines Anglo-Nuri collaboration in securing a new oil agreement, while overcoming domestic opposition. Nuri had every incentive to work hard on this issue, since, according to

sacrificed a fundamental Hashemite-Gulf Arch asset compelled London not to undertake any major treaty initiatives in Iraq until opportune circumstances appeared. This decision to play for time did not prevent London from contingency planning, however. Given the treaty's volatile history, revision (or termination) might at any time become such a hot issue in Iraq that Nuri could ignore it only at the price of his own pre-eminence.⁴⁷

According to Foreign Office assessments, if political controversy reached flash-point, superficial compromise was acceptable if such tactics protected broader strategic prerogatives. Anglo-Iraqi connections at their most fundamental level remained non-negotiable, though.⁴⁸

Growing Iraqi interest in securing military assistance from sources other than Britain, especially the United States, presented another potentially dangerous problem.⁴⁹ Iraq's leaders, with Foreign Minister Fadil Jamali in the vanguard, implored Washington to expand its influence in the interest of strengthening Iraqi-American relations.⁵⁰ Although United States officials in Baghdad expressed in no uncertain terms American lack of interest in supplanting Britain as primary Mesopotamian supplier of weaponry, Iraqi overtures did provide a convenient opportunity for these diplomats to lobby the Old Gang on the value of enacting various liberal programmes, including far-reaching political reform. Ambassador Burton Berry articulated a steady drumbeat of recommendations, openly suggesting Iraq's government broaden its base, to include dissident elements in the media, academe, and elsewhere.⁵¹

Lukitz, *Iraq*, p. 84, Western oil barons gave him kickbacks in exchange for supporting their contracts. See also NIE 36.2-56, 17 July 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 435.

⁴⁷ JPS Memorandum, 17 January 1951, *BDEEP:E&DME II* no. 91 discusses how just such a situation arose in 1951. See also Eppel, "Decline," p. 188.

⁴⁸ US Embassy London to DOS, 6 March 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1377.

⁴⁹ Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 21 April 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1378.

⁵⁰ Memcon: B. Berry and F. Jamali, 12 August 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1381.

⁵¹ DOS to US Embassy Baghdad, 24 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1385.

Berry's exhortations constituted merely one of many reasons why London strongly opposed increased American support for Iraq. First, while British officials at least paid lip service to the benefits of 'progressive' social measures such as land redistribution, on the topic of meaningful political reform, they displayed notable unenthusiasm—a sentiment with which Nuri agreed.⁵² Based on its stillborn liberalising initiatives of the late 1940s, and in light of a broadly-based consensus of Iraqi nationalism, London knew courting such schemes posed significant danger to Britain's Mesopotamian hegemony.⁵³

Second, recognising pervasive anti-Hashemite strains in Iraqi military forces, long-standing British policy regarding arms supply to that country was to extend only enough resources to handle internal security and, as a last resort, execute regional military operations such as sustaining Hashemite power in Jordan.⁵⁴ Although some in the Ministry of Defence advocated expanding Iraqi military power, in general the Foreign Office had no intention of fortifying Baghdad's forces to a point where Iraq could engage in large-scale combat against capable adversaries, such as Israel or the Soviet Union. To the extent that they expected Soviet hostilities, British leaders planned to use regionally-based RAF assets to strike enemy troop concentrations and other targets along Russia's southern periphery.⁵⁵

Treaty arrangements stipulating British and Iraqi forces use similar military hardware and logistical stocks, to facilitate joint operations if these became necessary, reinforced British tendencies to perpetuate control over Iraqi resupply. Finally, since

⁵² J.F. Brewis Memorandum, 27 July 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ 1051/6. As Kingston, p. 99, notes: "Britain was interested in promoting [Iraqi] socio-economic development, without structural reform."

⁵³ Silverfarb, *Twilight*, pp. 91-92 outlines British calculations regarding costs and benefits of Iraqi political liberalisation.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 96, 98, 135; El-Solh, p. 90.

⁵⁵ BDCC Memorandum, 23 February 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 369; PRO CAB 128 (54) 37th Conclusions, 2 June 1954; Ovendale, *Transfer*, pp. 59, 69; Silverfarb, *Informal*, p. 77.

monopolising arms sales to Iraq indirectly transferred Mesopotamian oil royalties to British control—thereby sustaining Britain’s ‘sterling area’-based economy—London had additional inducement to keep the United States at bay.⁵⁶ Baghdad naturally resented these limitations on its capability and sought enhancement from other sources.⁵⁷ To justify their bid for logistical augmentation, Iraqi leaders complained about frequent unserviceability and undue delivery delays plaguing British supply efforts. Lingering friction from the 1930s, when Britain failed to fulfill Iraqi military requirements—at least as Baghdad perceived those requirements—no doubt contributed to these tensions.⁵⁸ As the frequency and intensity of Iraqi requests for United States aid increased, however, Washington learned British officials were “most anxious” American weapons sales or assistance stay “within very narrow limits.”⁵⁹

When in early 1953 a strongly conservative government secured an overwhelming majority in Iraq’s Parliament by “blatant...election rigging,” British fortunes appeared to improve substantially. Although British officials recognised Nuri—*eminence grise* in this new regime—had “no interest in solv[ing] Iraq’s basic problems,” on other, more pressing strategic issues, this government suited British purposes well.⁶⁰ In line with its Old Gang sensibilities, the new Iraqi regime displayed every interest in keeping close ties with London. The Foreign Office noted with pleasure that not only would British corporate interests in Iraq—such as IPC and Baghdad Power and Light—remain free

⁵⁶ PRO CAB 128 (55) 24th Conclusions, 15 March 1955 links arms sales to Iraq with British economic well-being. See also FO Memorandum, 7 January 1956, PRO FO 371/121271 V1075/39.

⁵⁷ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 24 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1386.

⁵⁸ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 28 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1399; Lukitz, *Axioms*, pp. 115, 121; El-Solh, pp. 88-90.

⁵⁹ R. Belgrave Minute, 18 August 1953, PRO FO 371/104240 E1199/1; FO to DOS, 7 November 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1387.

⁶⁰ US Embassy Baghdad to FO, 7 March 1953, PRO FO 371/104655 EQ1016/20; UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 22 June 1953, PRO FO 371/104655 EQ1016/32. Eppel, “Decline,” p. 193 discusses the Foreign Office decision to stick with Old Gang strongmen despite British realisation of this faction’s political shortcomings.

from nationalist pressures, but perhaps the time had also come to roll dice for the biggest stakes of all: updating formal Anglo-Iraqi treaty arrangements.⁶¹

Presumably Iraq's new conservative government would also refrain from soliciting American aid, thereby eliminating a point of vulnerability for British preponderance. This last assumption did not materialise, however. Less than two months after taking power, this regime formally requested substantial United States military assistance, including armour and aircraft.⁶² As before, London reacted negatively, remarking that Washington "should not supplant Britain as principal source for Iraqi arms and military equipment...to tamper with existing defence arrangements will be unwise."⁶³

To some extent, this issue intensified when Dulles visited Baghdad in Spring 1953. Jamali, then serving as Iraqi Chamber of Deputies President, once again requested American support, this time in a context of 'moderate' Middle Eastern nationalism, in which regional powers would maintain ties with the West but do so from positions of full political and economic independence. His approach appealed to Dulles' strategic sensibilities, which held that such configurations yielded maximum long-term stability. Jamali's clever presentation whetted the Secretary's interest in assisting Baghdad within an umbra of regional defence planning. However, based on his own political instincts, and advice Berry had proffered on early occasions, Dulles knew regional problems such as the "existing [Arab-Israeli] feud" precluded a reckless approach on this issue. Proceeding cautiously until structures were in place to provide political cover seemed

⁶¹ A.D.M. Ross Memorandum, 4 February 1953, PRO FO 371/104655 EQ1016/11. Penrose, p. 155 has additional information on British-owned Baghdad Power and Light.

⁶² FJP p. 582; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 28 March 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 126; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 24 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1395. Iraq's formal request for aid came on March 21st 1953.

⁶³ FO to DOS, 22 April 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 128. See also Eveland, p. 66.

essential.⁶⁴ Nor did Dulles want to displace existing political and military arrangements; he informed Berry of his respect for British preponderance in Iraq.⁶⁵ Therefore, after a long delay in considering Iraq's earlier solicitation, the State Department in early July outlined a non-committal position, informing Baghdad of its decision merely to "study" Baghdad's request.⁶⁶

Washington abruptly changed course in late summer 1953. An American Heads of Mission Conference suggested the United States allocate at least \$30 million in aid across the Middle East, including Iraq, and establish military missions or resident supervisory teams to oversee American assistance.⁶⁷ Ascertaining the reasons for this seemingly inexplicable shift is challenging, although the Shah's recent restoration probably played a significant role in this reorientation, as the United States could now distribute regional assistance without snubbing Iranian pride, or pushing Tehran closer to a Soviet alignment.⁶⁸ A quantum shift in Jamali's political influence—his star was rising, and he became Premier in September 1953—may also have influenced White House attitudes. Jamali linked the pace of Iraqi reform to the magnitude of American assistance,

⁶⁴ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and F. Jamali, 18 May 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 33; 147th NSC Meeting, 1 June 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 137; DOS to UK Embassy Washington, 1 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1393; UK-US Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 11 July 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 V* p. 1631; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 24 October 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 100. Ominously, Berry warned that regional problems remained sufficiently intractable as to recommend against any Iraqi participation in security groupings. He later abandoned this stance, although events eventually substantiated his earlier reservations. Thacher, p. 66 analyses State Department disagreements regarding Iraqi participation in non-Arab regional security. Mufti, p. 168, notes that a key component of American Middle Eastern strategy involved support for "populist nationalist leaders [who] possessed domestic credibility," yet still valued ties with the West. Dulles' enthusiasm for Jamali surely sprang from this factor.

⁶⁵ Eveland, p. 67. See also Schorr, p. 72.

⁶⁶ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 24 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1395.

⁶⁷ Persson, pp. 126, 139 outlines American aid programmes for Iraq and other Middle Eastern states in Summer and Autumn 1953. He maintains that Dulles essentially lured Iraq into the Northern Tier with this aid. My interpretation, by contrast, holds that Dulles used the Northern Tier as a political shield to justify assisting Iraq. See also Devereaux, p. 145.

⁶⁸ Brands, "Cairo-Tehran" discusses possible links between Middle Eastern mutual security and the Shah's August 1953 restoration. Using significant new evidence from American intelligence agencies, James Risen assesses Western roles and responsibility apropos Mossadegh's downfall; see his article "How a Plot Convulsed Iran in 1953" *NYT*, 16 April 2000, p. 1. Although Risen does not focus on how this "plot" fit into a broader context of Anglo-American global strategy, Persson, p. 158, Ruehsen, and Gasiorski, "1953" do.

but eloquently managed to do so in a way that appeared a bona fide cry for help rather than outright blackmail.⁶⁹

Consistent with Dulles' prevailing vision of Middle Eastern aid as a mechanism to solidify Western regional ties and influence, rather than a measure to thwart imminent Soviet military offensives, Assistant Secretary of State Henry Byroade assessed Washington's new programme as having "produc[tion of] political dividends" as its object.⁷⁰ Similarly, other American diplomats later identified this programme's *raison d'être* as a "constructive and thoughtful effort...to restore [Arab] confidence in genuine American interest in friendship with 40 million Arabs...[in order] to reverse dangerous trends [in which] the Arab World [has moved] away from the United States and [the] West."⁷¹ Berry's input shows that he, too, understood Dulles' overall formulation: he cleverly suggested using American resources to equip an Iraqi mountain brigade. Such a formation would attain optimal effectiveness *only* along Iraq's rugged northern boundary, proximate to the Soviet threat, rather than in southern (Saudi Arabia), southwestern (Israel), or western (Syria) directions, thus keeping American aid unambiguously above intra-Arab and Arab-Israeli frays.⁷² That Baghdad could use this brigade to release Iraqi resources for other purposes represented a potentially serious flaw in Berry's formulation, however.

In any event, renewed American interest in aiding Iraq and Jordan panicked British officials; their reaction was a testament both to the Hashemite-Gulf Arch's defining characteristics, and this entity's fundamental importance in British global strategy. The Foreign Office suggested blocking any United States presence constituted a

⁶⁹ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 20 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1394. US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 27 October 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1397 demonstrates Jamali's dogged pursuit of American support, and the ways in which his lobbying influenced American calculations.

⁷⁰ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 9 September 1953, PRO FO 371/104240 E1199/13.

⁷¹ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 3 September 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 886.

“vital” British interest, since American involvement might “seriously disturb” Anglo-Iraqi and Anglo-Jordanian ties, while triggering “deplorable political effect[s].”⁷³ London simply “did not want American experts” to become established in the Hashemite kingdoms, and grappled with “problem[s] of how to prevent this aid from seriously undermining our position and interests [and to] minimise the detriment [such assistance] might cause to our own positions” there.⁷⁴ British diplomats in Baghdad concurred, noting the necessity of proceeding “most careful[ly] [to] protect our own pre-eminent Iraqi position.”⁷⁵ Whitehall’s strong interest in major budgetary cutbacks, including defence spending, heightened Foreign Office urgency, since Britain could not respond to United States assistance by launching its own major aid programmes.⁷⁶

British exertions blunted American efforts at providing aid for Baghdad. By late November 1953, Dulles had outlined a program significantly limiting the scope and nature of United States support to Iraq.⁷⁷ His rationale for an open-ended deferral to London is not entirely clear. Several factors probably contributed to this decision. Dulles’ shift of focus toward Iran at the expense of other Middle Eastern states probably enjoyed first-rate importance. An initial wave of American euphoria over Mossadegh’s ouster had passed, yielding to serious concerns about the long-term prospects for an obviously-fragile Iranian regime. Officials in Tehran and Washington assailed the State Department,

⁷² US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 24 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1395.

⁷³ FO Minute, 17 August 1953, PRO FO 371/104240 E1199/1; FO Memorandum, 29 August 1953, PRO FO 371/104240 E1199/7; J.E. Powell-Jones Memorandum, 10 November 1953, PRO FO 371/104240 E1199/27.

⁷⁴ P.A. Thompson Minute, 10 September 1953, PRO FO 371/104240 E1199/11; J.E. Powell-Jones Memorandum, 8 October 1953, PRO FO 371/104240 E1199/22; R.W. McLeod to R. Ewbank, 28 October 1953, PRO FO 371/104240 E1199/22C; P.S. Falla Memorandum, 10 April 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 508.

⁷⁵ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 9 November 1953, PRO FO 371/104240 E1199/29; Cabinet Paper, 15 February 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 491; Louis, “Anti-Colonialism,” p. 261; and Rothwell, p. 159.

⁷⁶ FO Memorandum, November 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 453.

⁷⁷ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Baghdad, 25 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1398.

requesting large-scale assistance for Iran to offset a complete collapse there.⁷⁸ Finite United States foreign aid budgets meant an increase in Iranian aid would constrain American support elsewhere, including Iraq.⁷⁹ Dulles therefore needed a ‘burden-sharing’ programme in which he could depend on London to pick up any economic or military slack in Baghdad; presumably he remained unaware Britain planned a significant diminution of its regional resource allocation. Perhaps Dulles also wanted to cajole British leaders into resolving lingering Iranian petroleum disputes: if London scored a political ‘victory’ in Iraq, forcing AIOC to compromise on a settlement would presumably be more palatable.⁸⁰

These trends, particularly Washington’s overwhelming interest in avoiding an Iranian destabilisation, had by early 1954 become so compelling that Foreign Office and State Department officials established a secret Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formally subordinating the United States role in Iraq to that of Britain.⁸¹ Jamali’s continued entreaties, and his ability to manipulate State Department interest in regional defence arrangements as a way to expedite Middle Eastern aid, spurred Washington to authorise an Iraqi assistance package—which caused significant solicitude for British

⁷⁸ NIE-102: “Probable Developments in Iran through 1954”, 16 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 387; US Embassy Tehran to DOS, 19 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 389. J.F. Dulles to US Embassy London, 8 September 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 365 is an early illustration of American focus shifting decisively toward Iran.

⁷⁹ 177th NSC Meeting, 23 December 1953, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 398 estimates that \$100-150 million in yearly support was necessary to prevent Iran’s government from falling.

⁸⁰ 180th and 181st NSC Meetings, 14 & 21 January 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 X* nos. 408 and 414 are but a few documents illustrating Washington’s fixation on an AIOC settlement.

⁸¹ NSC Report 5402: “United States Policy Toward Iran,” 2 January 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 403 is a key document showing increasing American recognition of Iran’s importance. *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1407 contains the text of the Anglo-American MOU outlining British pre-eminence in Iraq; Axelgard, pp. 83-86 summarises and analyzes the memorandum’s background and significance; see also Jasse, Takeyh, “Pan-Arabism” p. 195, Persson, pp. 140-41, and Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 94. Incidentally, Dulles’ Iran-Iraq *quid pro quo* strategy apparently paid dividends. Shortly after the MOU took effect, Eden implored AIOC officials to compromise, hoping to conclude the Iranian oil dispute (PRO CAB 128 (54) 20th Conclusions, 17 March 1954).

officials—but its small size (\$10 million) underscored the Anglo-American memorandum’s impact.⁸²

Although London scored a clear-cut victory by obtaining this MOU, on other fronts the Hashemite-Gulf Arch sagged. Not only did Jamali remain determined to tighten Iraqi-American ties; he also wanted to phase out any formal connection with Britain, and made no secret of his inclinations in this regard.⁸³ Of special concern was his interest in regaining control of Habbaniyah and Shaiba, an objective which made British officials “anxious.”⁸⁴ As a palliative to London, Jamali proposed arrangements whereby Britain retained some base access, although tight limitations along the lines of an existing American status-of-forces agreement with Turkey would circumscribe this entrée. Just as they had recently dismissed Iraqi requests to fashion British basing privileges on the model Riyadh and Washington had arranged for United States forces in Saudi Arabia—since such liberal provisions would “place too much control in [Iraqi] hands”—British authorities totally rejected Jamali’s suggestion, deciding instead to “educate [Iraqi leaders] in the hard facts of power politics.”⁸⁵ Habbaniyah and Shaiba played central roles in protecting all aspects of Britain’s Arch; troops stationed there could deter Soviet aggression, quash dissent in Iraq and Jordan, and, if necessary, deploy to the Gulf and uphold British commitments there.

⁸² US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 26 January 1952, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 181; DOS to US Embassy Baghdad, 28 January 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 186; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 17 February 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 195; Thacher, p. 66; and Axelgard, p. 88 describe British unease over American assistance for Iraq.

⁸³ FO Memorandum, November 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 453; UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 22 December 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 462. Eppel, “Decline”, pp. 194-95 outlines Anglo-Iraqi antagonism during Jamali’s premiership.

⁸⁴ G.H. Baker Memorandum, 28 January 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ1051/2.

⁸⁵ P.A. Rhodes Memorandum, 17 November 1951, PRO FO 371/91639 EQ1052/26; P.L.V. Mallet Minute, 6 January 1954; FO Minute, 18 January 1954; FO Minute, 25 January 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ1051/1.

These attempts to dissuade Jamali did not result in the effects the Foreign Office sought; he maintained pressure for British concessions.⁸⁶ As the futility of stubbornness became increasingly evident, British attitudes eased somewhat. Eden, in fact, had recognised rather early the difficulty in shaking off Jamali, because Iraqis in general resented not only “[British] occupation of military bases in Iraq,” but also disapproved of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty. He understood the “political impossibility” of carrying through any extension of this agreement under present circumstances, although the challenge of developing realistic alternatives perplexed him.⁸⁷ By default, the Foreign Office stuck firmly to its belief that any alteration of existing Anglo-Iraqi linkages must transpire only underneath an umbrella of Old Gang domination. An opportunity for progress toward British objectives in Iraq appeared in April 1954, when Jamali resigned his premiership. British officials, who probably had Nuri in mind, instructed their Hashemite allies to arrange for a “strong” successor regime.⁸⁸

National elections in early June failed to yield the “strong” Iraqi government Britain had sought. The Constitutional Union Party—a bastion of Iraq’s conservative elite—retained a legislative plurality (possessing roughly two-fifths of the Iraqi Parliament’s 135 seats), but majority support for their initiatives was by no means certain.⁸⁹ These elections underscored Hashemite unpopularity, and, in combination with Jamali’s ascendancy the previous summer, this most recent failure apparently illustrated decreasing Old Gang ability to shape Iraqi political landscapes according to its own whims and ambitions. Although Iraq’s new regime advocated greater Hashemite unity—a project anathema to the State Department because of its negative implications for Arab-

⁸⁶ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 24 February 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 495.

⁸⁷ A. Eden to W. Churchill, 12 January 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 478.

⁸⁸ PRO CAB 129 (54) CP 181, 31 May 1954; PRO CAB 128 (54) 37th Conclusions, 2 June 1954; Persson, p. 46.

⁸⁹ J.F. Brewis Memorandum, 27 July 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ1051/6; Ara Sinjian.

Israeli détente, but commensurate with British regional goals since it strengthened the Arch—this government was, broadly speaking, unacceptable in London’s strategic perspective.⁹⁰ Ominous noises from Baghdad regarding the dim prospects for continued Anglo-Iraqi alliance proved particularly alarming. As had been the case earlier that year, Iraqi leaders suggested on numerous occasions that their 1932 treaty with Britain had exceeded its useful life, and now represented an anachronism fit only for the rubbish-heap of history.⁹¹

This increasingly vocal and nationalist assertiveness, in tandem with a recent upsurge of American influence in Iraq despite the earlier MOU, jolted Whitehall.⁹² An Iraqi ‘nightmare scenario’—in which some form of what British officials labeled a “peoples’ government” gained power in Baghdad, deposed Iraq’s conservative elite, and cut ties with Britain, thereby eviscerating the Hashemite-Gulf Arch—now seemed within the realm of possibility. The Foreign Office therefore planned a response to such dire circumstances. Since earlier British assumptions had postulated that Old Gang crackdowns and oppression could restore order in Baghdad even in the event of widespread unrest (as had happened following the 1948 Wathbah), thus allowing, as British diplomat R.W.J Hooper noted, “the British colony [Iraq] to return to business as usual,” as of mid-1954 no specific plans existed beyond temporary evacuation of British nationals. As Old Gang strength ebbed, however, British officials now considered more assertive measures for “protection of British interests.” They created Operation *Candidus*, a plan for “prompt and decisive” British intervention if popular disturbances threatened

⁹⁰ *Descent*, 10 June 1954, p. 219; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and F. Jamali, 12 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 218; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and F. Jamali, 22 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1418; Seale, pp. 166-70; Lesch, *Syria*, p. 45; Rathmell, pp. 86-87. For Foreign Minister Jamali, Iraqi-Jordanian-Syrian federation became *idee fixe* by mid-1954, since Shishakli’s recent fall opened up obvious opportunities. He even contemplated an outright attack on Syria to attain such an outcome. Dulles opposed this idea.

⁹¹ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 7 August 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ 1051/4.

Hashemite strongmen or, even worse, Iraqi nationalists actually rose to power. Since *Candidus* dealt with a wide range of possible adverse scenarios, this plan entailed significant flexibility; Britain would, if possible, use intimidation rather than resorting to straight force. If, for instance, Iraq's populace revolted against Old Gang domination, London would threaten to "occupy their country in force and make Iraq more of a colony than ever" if they did not submit to Hashemite authority.⁹³

The expected difficulty of direct intervention meant *Candidus* rested primarily on bluff. Although the Chiefs of Staff suggested maintaining Iraq's pro-British orientation was so critical as to justify partial wartime mobilisation in Britain, Defence Ministry planners anticipated overthrowing an Iraqi nationalist government would require two divisions. Since only one British brigade (and scattered indigenous forces such as the Arab Legion) was available in theatre, and Britain lacked long-distance power projection capabilities, the Foreign Office recognised the necessity of relying mainly on threats and demonstrations of force to keep any unstable situation from deteriorating.⁹⁴ From its fulcrums at Habbaniyah and Shaiba London could display its determination; by airlifting reinforcements into these bases, British leaders might cow opposition forces and keep Old Gang resolve from wavering. *Candidus* did not outline in any detail the activities of these reinforcements subsequent to their arrival at British bases in Iraq; Britain's Ambassador and Air Officer Commanding in Iraq had responsibility for orchestrating their activities based on specific circumstances.⁹⁵

⁹² Axelgard, p. 86; UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 30 June 1954, PRO FO 371/111998 VQ10345/3. Brewis' and Shuckburgh's subsequent minutes show that at that particular time, diplomats at UK Embassy Baghdad had greater fears concerning American influence than Foreign Office authorities.

⁹³ R.W.J. Hooper Memorandum, 30 July 1954, PRO FO 371/111004 VQ1091/G.

⁹⁴ P.S. Falla Memorandum, 16 August 1954, *ibid.*

⁹⁵ GHQMEFL to MOD; P. Mallet Memorandum, 30 August 1954; MOD Memorandum, 3 September 1954, *ibid.*; COS (54) 299th Meeting, 8 September 1954, PRO FO 371/111004 VQ1091/4/G.

Although *Candidus* illustrated growing Foreign Office anxieties about Iraq's destiny, British fortunes received quite a boost when, in early August 1954, Nuri consolidated Hashemite power in decisive fashion. After consulting with British officials and Crown Prince Abdul Ilah, he enacted a programme that, as one author euphemistically observes, "left nothing to chance" in terms of insuring Old Gang domination: he dissolved Iraq's Chamber of Deputies, overturned June's disappointing election results, suppressed political parties with nationalist orientations (notably the Istiqlal (Independence) and National Democratic parties), and, by rigging September elections, filled his new government with close supporters and sycophants.⁹⁶ Soon thereafter he shut down 300 Iraqi newspapers.⁹⁷ The Foreign Office immediately recognised a window of British opportunity now stood open—Nuri had "dispersed his opponents, muzzled the opposition press, and [secured] a Parliament submissive to his will"—so the Iraqi strongman occupied a superb position to logroll an extension of the Anglo-Iraqi connection on terms favourable to London.⁹⁸

Previously, political calculations inherent in a quasi-democratic process to some extent limited Nuri's freedom of action on this count. For instance, before his consolidation, Nuri had to treat gingerly any policies which gave additional credence to opposition charges that he was an "imperialist stooge," if he hoped to maintain any semblance of power.⁹⁹ His August crackdown, however, eased these constraints

⁹⁶ UK Embassy Baghdad to A. Eden, 11 September 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ1051/10; M. Wright Memorandum, 17 May 1955, PRO FO 371/115759 VQ1051/99. *Descent*, 15 July 1954, p. 224 discusses Anglo-Hashemite-'Old Gang' consultations regarding Nuri's crackdown on domestic opposition; Lukitz, *Iraq*, p. 130 describes Iraqi nationalist parties such as Istiqlal. See also Gallman, pp. 93, 97, 99; Glubb, p. 298; Birdwood, pp. 227-28, 236; Heikal, p. 53; Persson, p. 145; Podeh, *Quest*, pp. 80-81; Monroe, p. 181. Monroe cryptically observes that Nuri rigged Iraq's September elections "for purposes of stability." Dorril, p. 604, misdates Nuri's crackdown to Summer 1955.

⁹⁷ *MEJ* Volume IX no. 1 (1955) p. 59.

⁹⁸ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 1 September 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ1051/10; Kyle, p. 104.

⁹⁹ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 7 August 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ 1051/4.

considerably. Now he could initiate negotiations with London without facing immediate and powerful nationalist pressure.¹⁰⁰

This window of opportunity had neither infinite magnitude nor duration, however. As British officials in London and Baghdad realised, Nuri's advanced age and ill health suggested his political preponderance faced strict limits.¹⁰¹ He, of course, entirely supported strong Anglo-Iraqi connections, since those ties were in many ways his creation, and his power rested firmly on them.¹⁰² To sever that link meant political (and perhaps literal) suicide for Nuri, who was no fool. As one scholar notes, Nuri favoured perpetuating treaty relations "because [he] considered the [Anglo-Iraqi] alliance to be a factor of stability for the [Hashemite] order."¹⁰³ Maintaining robust ties with Britain therefore represented his and London's direct and best interest. The challenge was doing so in a way that maximised not only the long-term domestic viability of the Anglo-Iraqi alliance, but Iraqi regional influence and capabilities as well.¹⁰⁴ Recognising Nuri's keen political insight and experience on these issues, British officials gave him significant latitude, provided he did not let momentum diminish.¹⁰⁵

With this *carte blanche* in hand, Nuri launched a number of trial balloons, testing Middle Eastern political currents for intensity and direction. For over a year, he had contemplated various regional defence schemes as a possible mechanism for cloaking an updated Anglo-Iraqi agreement.¹⁰⁶ However, domestic political setbacks and unfavourable regional trends foreclosed these options until Spring 1954, when, after months of difficult negotiations, Ankara and Islamabad finally agreed to the Turko-

¹⁰⁰ Ashton, *Problem*, p. 43.

¹⁰¹ P.S. Falla Memorandum, 20 September 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ1051/10; P.S. Falla Memorandum, 25 September 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ1051/12; Reid, p. 161.

¹⁰² Axelgard, p. 78; Persson, p. 149.

¹⁰³ Ara Sinjian.

¹⁰⁴ Kyle, p. 104.

¹⁰⁵ P.S. Falla Memorandum, 1 October 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 549; Jasse; Persson, pp. 150-51, 207.

¹⁰⁶ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 9 March 1955, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 583.

Pakistani Pact. This loose arrangement enjoyed full American support, outlined periodic defence consultation between these two states, and provided a convenient blueprint for extending Anglo-Iraqi ties.¹⁰⁷ Within this context, Nuri had recently considered a bilateral treaty with Islamabad, presumably predicated on Pakistan's distance from the Middle East's tumultuous political epicenter.¹⁰⁸ His other options—joining the Turko-Pakistani Pact, or linking with Ankara singly—entailed significant risk, in light of relatively amicable Turko-Israeli relations, and Ottoman imperialism, still fresh in collective Iraqi consciousness.¹⁰⁹

Although Nuri had for years dreamt of aligning with Turkey,¹¹⁰ he probably understood Gamal Nasser's embryonic power and wanted to avoid an immediate showdown with Egyptian (and Arab) nationalism; Cairo made no secret of its opposition to amalgamations linking Arab states with Western powers or with Turkey.¹¹¹ Given Nuri's background, reputation, and orientation, deliberately provoking these potentially explosive forces was dangerous—attempting, however superficially, to palliate them was more prudent. Such considerations probably influenced Nuri's stance in talks at Sarsank in late August 1954, at which Iraqi and Egyptian representatives discussed various collective security alternatives.¹¹² Nuri suggested close ties between Baghdad and Cairo in an ACSP context. As described above, ACSP was weak, bound only by virulent anti-Zionism. Nuri had little affection for this organisation, and his commitment to meaningful and positive ties with Egypt was non-existent. In secret meetings with British

¹⁰⁷ NSC Report 5510/1, 28 February 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XXIV* no. 320.

¹⁰⁸ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 5 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 202; DOS:TSDSS Box 86, 18 August 1954.

¹⁰⁹ J.F. Powell-Jones Memorandum, 2 November 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 558.

¹¹⁰ Khadduri, p. 255.

¹¹¹ M.J. Creswell Memorandum, 1 April 1953, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 386; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 9 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 786; UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 11 August 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 542.

¹¹² Seale, pp. 201-6 describes the Sarsank talks. Jasse, Ara Sinjian, Takeyh, "Pan-Arabism", p. 197, and Podeh, *Quest*, pp. 82-87 are also valuable.

officials he had recently described his intention to “split the Arab League and leave Egypt out in the cold,” and he dismissed ACSP as “mere ink on paper.”¹¹³ Consistent with his awareness that outright Egyptian opposition could cause real problems, however, he needed to make at least token efforts to engage Nasser. Cairo had on earlier occasions registered misgivings about an Iraqi-Turkish coalition, particularly in the context of a Western defence grouping, and astute negotiating at Sarsank could, perhaps, remove this criticism.¹¹⁴

Nuri’s mid-1954 overtures to Cairo gave Dulles a very frustrating form of *déjà vu*.¹¹⁵ Earlier that year, United States aid to Iraq became entangled in a damaging controversy over the Arab-Israeli dispute. Before moving forward with that assistance package, Dulles had “implied [to Iraqi leaders the] amount [of American] aid would probably depend on [the] effectiveness [of] Iraqi participation” in anti-Soviet regional security, and Baghdad had initially played along.¹¹⁶ However, immediately before Washington announced details of American assistance, Iraqi leaders withdrew from their earlier commitments in this regard, hoping to secure this aid *before* entering any formal mutual security arrangements.¹¹⁷

Commensurate with American strategic assumptions that Middle Eastern aid could be politically palatable *only* in a containment context, Dulles seriously contemplated canceling all assistance to Baghdad. He reconsidered only after Berry undertook an intense lobbying campaign, in which the Ambassador forecast political

¹¹³ *Descent*, 15 July 1954, p. 224; Faddah, p. 233.

¹¹⁴ US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 20 March 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1303.

¹¹⁵ Persson, p. 153 maintains that Dulles opposed Nuri’s Sarsank initiative because he feared the ruination of his Northern Tier. Freiberger, p. 96 asserts that Dulles’ opposition sprang from his desire to isolate Egypt, thus enabling Washington “to lure [Nasser] more easily into a Middle East Defence Organisation, with promises of Western aid.” My interpretation varies somewhat, holding that Dulles feared Iraqi-Egyptian connections in an Arab League context might embroil American aid in regional quarrels.

¹¹⁶ DOS:TSDSS Box 85, 1 March 1954; J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Beirut, 20 March 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 198.

¹¹⁷ DOS:TSDSS Box 85, 16 March 1954.

chaos in Iraq if United States aid did not materialise.¹¹⁸ Based on the strident criticism emanating from Tel Aviv once Israeli leaders became aware of potential American assistance to Baghdad,¹¹⁹ Dulles anticipated “strong Zionist political pressure” if Washington followed through with Iraqi aid. This concern compelled him to appeal directly to Eisenhower, who gave his approval while noting his interest that “[this] agreement [become] identifi[ed]...with [the] Turk-Pakistani Pact.” In other words, the President hoped to dilute any controversy over this aid package by keeping it within ‘containment’ confines.¹²⁰ As Dulles had predicted, Tel Aviv and its American supporters immediately registered intense opposition to this assistance.¹²¹

Hoping to blunt this resistance, United States leaders dove beneath the ‘political cover’ Dulles had previously assembled by means of his Northern Tier paradigm. Eisenhower himself set a precedent; others soon followed in his wake. During a late-April press conference, an Israeli reporter questioned the President about his decision to assist Iraq. Eisenhower answered: “American military assistance is not for the purpose of assisting Iraq in a local war of any kind...it is for the common purpose of opposing Communism.”¹²² In Tel Aviv, American charge d’affaires Francis Russell informed Israeli diplomats that “Iraq is genuinely and intelligently concerned over dangers from

¹¹⁸ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Baghdad, 8 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1409; DOS:TSDSS Box 85, 9 & 13 April 1954; W.B. Smith to US Embassy Baghdad, 15 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1410; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 16 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1411; J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Baghdad, 19 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1413; Eveland, p. 82; Ara Sinjian. Memcon: J.W. Jernegan and H. Gork, 9 January 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 169 is an interesting document, in that Jernegan deviated from the State Department stance on linkages between military assistance and regional defence arrangements, in this case regarding Iraqi aid. See also Freiberger, pp. 91-92. Podeh, *Quest*, pp. 65, 68-69 maintains that Dulles applied conditions to American assistance for Iraq primarily because he put similar conditions on Pakistani assistance, and sought consistency. DOS:TSDSS Box 84, 29 January 1954 provides at least circumstantial support for this argument. However, I contend that a desire for consistency had at best superficial impact on American calculations. Much more significant was Dulles’ interest in cloaking both Pakistani and Iraqi aid within a Cold War framework.

¹¹⁹ DOS:TSDSS Box 85, 3 March 1954.

¹²⁰ Memcon: D. Eisenhower and J.F. Dulles, 21 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 806.

¹²¹ Memcon: J. F. Dulles and A. Eban, 13 May 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 823; Memcon: H. Byroade, A. Eban, M. Dayan, 16 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 842. See also Levey, Perlmann, and Sayed-Ahmed, p. 105.

the north [i.e., the Soviet Union] and [is] prepared to take steps to promote security against [the Soviets].”¹²³ Similarly, Byroade hunkered down behind the Northern Tier ‘shelter.’ He assured Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban that Washington “did not plan to grant armed assistance to Arab states regardless of their intentions about joining a Middle East defense organization,” his point being that the State Department would subsequently pressure Arabs to commit themselves to an anti-Communist (rather than anti-Israeli) position *before* Washington extended aid. Not long after, American officials did just that when Lebanon requested additional assistance.¹²⁴

For his part, Dulles assured Israeli leaders that he “ha[d] no intention to increase Arab capabilities to [a] point where Israeli security is threatened.”¹²⁵ He also strongly warned Iraqi leaders against Syrian-Iraqi federation, despite their intense interest in such a project following Shishakli’s recent fall, informing them: “American arms agreements with Iraq have aroused Congressional friends of Israel...if the United States supports federation it will be taken that Washington is helping to endanger Israel’s existence.”¹²⁶ Along these lines, he once again threatened to terminate all United States assistance to Baghdad if Iraqi leaders pursued such a scheme. Later, under hostile Congressional questioning over American aid to Iraq, Byroade pursued an analogous theme, noting the

¹²² Presidential Press Conference, 29 April 1954, *PP:DDE* p. 436.

¹²³ US Embassy Tel Aviv to DOS, 29 April 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 813.

¹²⁴ Memcon: H. Byroade and A. Eban, 8 June 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 831; Memcon: J.W. Jernegan and C. Malik, 31 August 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 880.

¹²⁵ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Tel Aviv, 28 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 845.

¹²⁶ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and F. Jamali, 22 July 1954, FJP, p. 94. *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1418 has the American account of this exchange. See also Memcon: J.F. Dulles and F. Jamali, 12 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 218; Seale, pp. 166-70; Lesch, *Syria*, p. 45; Rathmell, pp. 86-87. Iraq provided financial and political support to hasten Shishakli’s fall (FJP, pp. 64-65, 68-69). As outlined in note 90 *supra*, by mid-1954 Foreign Minister Jamali had overwhelming interest in Syrian-Iraqi federation (FJP, pp. 84-86, 93). American unease regarding such an outcome may account for Dulles’ decision to decelerate the pace of Turko-Iraqi mutual security talks (DOS:TSDSS Box 86, 21 July 1954).

“new spirit in Iraq...for the first time the Iraqi government is making open and effective anti-Communist speeches.”¹²⁷

Although these rearguard tactics met only limited success—Israeli and Congressional criticism did not abate,¹²⁸ and Tel Aviv sought advanced American weaponry as a counterbalance to increasing Iraqi strength—this divisive and problematic episode apparently validated Dulles’ perspective regarding the absolute necessity of rationalising American support in terms of Middle Eastern efforts at “legitimate [i.e., Cold War-based] self-defense.”¹²⁹ When Nuri initiated a dialogue with Cairo in August 1954, Dulles saw this issue bedeviling American policy for the second time in less than six months, and jeopardising yet again his vision of United States aid wholly separate from the Arab-Israeli morass. Just as he had resisted Jamali’s earlier idea of an Arab federation under Hashemite auspices, he now opposed Nuri’s ACSP project for similar reasons. If Iraq linked with Egypt in an Arab League context, American military assistance to Baghdad would certainly become embroiled in the viper’s nest of problems between Israel and its neighbours, thereby shutting down the pipeline of aid Dulles counted on to stabilise governments along Moscow’s Middle Eastern periphery.¹³⁰ Indeed, events seemed to move in this unfavourable direction when Israel requested military aid, and an American commitment guaranteeing Israeli security, soon after Nuri floated his ACSP scheme.¹³¹ Furthermore, Dulles thought, ties with Egypt only distracted

¹²⁷ Winocour.

¹²⁸ See, for instance, criticism regarding American aid for Iraq from Representatives Irwin Davidson (D-NY) and Victor Anfuso (D-NY), and Senators Herbert Lehman (D-NY) and George Bender (D-OH), 16 March, 2 June, and 29 June 1955, 84th Congress, 1st Session, *CR* pp. 3060, 7488, 7498, and 9503.

¹²⁹ H. Byroade to J.F. Dulles, 3 June 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 830; Interview with Moshe Sharett, *USN&WR*, 4 November 1955, pp. 50-53.

¹³⁰ Israeli leaders did not hide their hostility for any ACSP-based regional defence. See Memcon: J.F. Dulles, H. Hoover, and A. Eban, 15 September 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 893. Podeh, *Quest*, pp. 85-86 contends that Dulles opposed ACSP as the basis for regional collective security because he favoured an American-led arrangement.

¹³¹ *ST*, 22 August & 12 September 1954, pp. 5, 9; Bar-Siman-Tov; Levy; AEOH. Dulles refused these requests.

Baghdad from the important issues at hand—internal reform and resistance to Soviet subversion.¹³² He wanted Iraq to abandon any notion of Iraqi-Egyptian alliance and shift its attention in a northerly direction.¹³³ Dulles also perceived anti-Western undercurrents in Arab League political attitudes, and probably expected these propensities to dilute his plan for increasing Middle Eastern solidarity and awareness regarding Soviet ambition.¹³⁴

In any event, Nuri shifted tactics in short order, abandoning all ACSP schemes in mid-September, while tentatively returning to his original conception of bilateral Pakistani-Iraqi agreements. Egyptian procrastination and vacillation in the wake of Sarsank allowed Nuri to justify this recalibration on the grounds that Iraq's "exposed position" rendered further delays impossible. Baghdad simply had to advance some form of regional defence blueprint, Nuri argued, although he promised Nasser that "Egypt eventually might participate" once these arrangements coalesced.¹³⁵ According to Nuri's secret blueprint—which British officials assessed as "ingenious"—Iraq's Parliament and populace would probably accept ties with Islamabad without protest, because such a connection did not contradict prevailing public sentiments. With this arrangement in place, London could then quietly join the Pakistani-Iraqi coalition and, in that context, secure its long-term ties with Baghdad, including access to Iraqi military bases. Of obvious importance to Nuri's latest brainchild was leaving a door open for accession by Western powers.¹³⁶

¹³² J.F. Dulles to H. Byroade, 23 August 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 225.

¹³³ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Baghdad, 31 August 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 227; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and M. Shabandar, 11 October 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 X* no. 1420; J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Tel Aviv, 19 January 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 8.

¹³⁴ H. Byroade to J. F. Dulles, 3 June 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 830; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and A. Menderes, 4 June 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 VIII* no. 488. NSC Statement of US Objectives and Policies in the Near East, 23 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 219 discusses unfavourable Arab League characteristics; see also DOS:TSDSS Box 86, 26 August 1954.

¹³⁵ US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 16 September 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 229; Heikal, p. 54.

¹³⁶ UK Embassy Baghdad to A. Eden, 11 September 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ1051/10; US Embassy Ankara to DOS, 9 October 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 231; I. Kirkpatrick Memorandum, 13 January 1956, PRO FO 371/121242 V1071/38; Lloyd, pp. 26, 36; Persson, pp. 243-44; Hobbs, p. 41. Ashton, *Problem*,

If *Candidus* envisioned a ‘nightmare scenario’ for Britain, then this Middle Eastern grouping represented the best of all worlds, since it secured a key portion of the Hashemite-Gulf Arch without directly confronting Iraqi nationalism—Nuri, in fact, would almost certainly reap domestic political benefits for ‘terminating’ the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty—thereby neatly solving a quandary that had plagued the Foreign Office for years. To coordinate his schemes with British officials and harmonise Anglo-Iraqi policies on specifically how and when the Old Gang should initiate these new defence arrangements “under cover of a multilateral pact,” Nuri traveled to London in late September.¹³⁷

In October, however, he switched tactics once again, setting aside his earlier plan for bilateral agreements with Pakistan in favour of a Turko-Iraqi accord.¹³⁸ This transition, which coalesced when the Iraqi Premier visited Ankara that month, apparently reflected his ‘Fertile Crescent’ fixations; one British official had recently observed Nuri’s apparent interest in “finding a throne for Iraq’s crown prince,” an obvious reference to Syria.¹³⁹ Since Nuri had recently requested his general staff draw up plans for Operation *X*, a military invasion of Syria, Iraqi armed forces stood ready to move west, upon receipt of orders to do so.¹⁴⁰ One of the few communities of interest between Old Gang and reformist platforms in Iraq was their mutual desire to absorb Syria,¹⁴¹ so pressing this issue involved little expenditure of Nuri’s domestic political capital. Forging tight connections with Ankara placed Syria in a Turko-Hashemite nutcracker; this

pp. 42-45 analyses Anglo-Iraqi strategies in mid-1954, including Old Gang political consolidation. On balance, his assessment is valuable. However, his contention that London was unaware of potential British gains from Nuri’s regional security schemes until relatively late is problematic. The Foreign Office *immediately* recognised that his plans benefited Hashemite *and* British interests.

¹³⁷ S. Lloyd to A. Eden, 20 September 1954, PRO FO 371/111000 VQ1051A; P.S. Falla Memorandum, 25 September 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 548; Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and G. Allen, 13 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 91.

¹³⁸ *MEJ* Volume IX no. 1 (1955) p. 59.

¹³⁹ P.S. Falla Memorandum, 1 October 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 549. *Descent*, 27 September 1954, p. 237 describes Nuri’s Syrian ambitions: “[he] is clearly looking after some permanent link of Syria with Iraq...” See also Embassy Baghdad to FO, 8 January 1955, PRO FO 371/114485 V1073/54.

¹⁴⁰ Rathmell, p. 119; Pipes, pp. 99-100.

envelopment, in combination with Syrian-Israeli antipathy, meant Damascus had potential adversaries on nearly every border. Such pressure, Baghdad had reason to hope, might compel Syria to merge with Iraq at last.

In a glaring oversight with profound Middle Eastern and Cold War implications, the State Department downplayed the full significance of Iraqi ambitions toward its western neighbour. In their haste to remove controversy surrounding United States aid to Baghdad by securing its commitment to containment-based regional defence—a stance which Dulles reiterated when Jamali requested additional American assistance in early November—American officials overlooked Hashemite machinations, although elsewhere in the Arab world, these schemes were all too clear.¹⁴² Perhaps Dulles thought he could restrain Iraqi and Turkish aggrandisement; if so he was sorely mistaken, as he learned the following year.

In the context of American sponsorship for Middle Eastern regional security, Dulles made another disastrous and self-defeating error, this time involving Arab-Israeli relations. Recall that his desire to ‘shelter’ United States assistance from political controversy constituted Dulles’ primary motivation in forming a collective defence system. However, he failed to appreciate Israeli antagonism to regional organisations. Tel Aviv favoured Arab fragmentation, to enhance Israeli strength vis-à-vis its adversaries. Therefore, Israel immediately denounced the collective security schemes Dulles strove to

¹⁴¹ Kienle, pp. 358-59.

¹⁴² US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 2 November 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1421; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and F. Jamali, 4 November 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1423. J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Ankara, 11 November 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 236 shows that Washington endeavoured half-heartedly to frustrate Iraqi ambitions vis-à-vis Syria. Dulles’ failure to pursue this point vigorously was absolutely inexplicable, since he knew that carrying a regional defence framework to Israeli frontiers carried risks of enormous magnitude. *Descent*, 4 February 1955, p. 249 indicates that Cairo perceived a Turko-Iraqi alliance as “a plot for eventual Syrian dismemberment.”

construct, plunging these programmes directly into controversies he had so assiduously sought to avoid. This Israeli criticism grew in stridency throughout 1955.¹⁴³

Despite these strategic liabilities, State Department enthusiasm for ties linking Baghdad and Ankara quickly transformed into a groundswell. As 1954 ended, Washington urged Nuri to press ahead with bilateral arrangements linking Iraq to Turkey, despite a resurrection of his earlier reservations about doing so.¹⁴⁴ Although on a recent occasion Nuri had sanguinely predicted an agreement with Ankara would “have no consequential ill-effect on [Iraqi] relations with other Arab states,” in late December he reverted to his earlier fear of Nasser’s opposition, meaning negligible future Iraqi movement on this initiative. His abrupt backtracking almost certainly resulted from the conclusions which emerged from a recent Arab League Foreign Ministers’ conference in Cairo. At Egyptian urging, nearly all ministers at this summit agreed to avoid formal security connections with external powers, preferring “loose autonomous confederations” instead.¹⁴⁵ Dulles apparently thought he could rein in any negative Arab responses such as these but, just as he overestimated his ability to curb Iraqi designs on Syria, so too did he misjudge State Department influence in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps a better option—one less offensive to Arab nationalism yet adequate justification for United States aid to Baghdad—may have been to nudge Baghdad toward Iraqi-Pakistani

¹⁴³ US Embassy Tel Aviv to DOS, 17 February 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 25 and US Embassy Tel Aviv to DOS, 4 March 1955, JFD:DOS Box 136 (see also *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* nos. 40 & 41) are illustrative, but certainly not the only examples of Israeli antagonism toward Middle Eastern regional security. Some American diplomats even suggested that this animosity motivated Israel to raid Gaza in early 1955. See also Freiberger, p. 105; Sayed-Ahmed, p. 107; and Hahn, p. 187.

¹⁴⁴ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 30 December 1954, PRO FO 371/115484 V1073/3; Persson, p. 198. By contrast, Carlton, p. 381, alleges that Dulles “had not approved creation of...regional security arrangement[s] involving only one Arab state.”

¹⁴⁵ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 7 December 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1425; C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum, 11 December 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 562; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 21 December 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 239; J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Ankara, 31 December 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 1427; R. Anderson to DOS, 19 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XV* no. 21; Axelgard, p. 87; Trevelyan, p. 56; Seale, p. 211; Takeyh, “Pan-Arabism” p. 193.

cooperation, as Nuri had contemplated only a few months earlier, although this, too, would most likely have failed to forestall Israeli criticism.

Understandably, most at the Foreign Office supported Nuri in this Iraqi-American stand-off. Were regional rivalries, Nasser's demagogic, or some other facet of Arab politics to engulf the Old Gang, the very basis of Britain's special position in Iraq would crumble, taking with it the Hashemite-Gulf Arch. So long as Nuri's health persisted, the Foreign Office still had a decent interval in which to work—better to wait for more favourable opportunities over the next two years if necessary than expose British allies to undue risk; if such opportunities did not appear, London could initiate bilateral defence talks with Iraq and renegotiate treaty extension through that route.¹⁴⁷ Above all, any regional pact to which Iraq agreed *had to possess long-term viability*, since British connections with Baghdad would be inextricably bound with this coalition. Indeed, Britain sought "arrangements embracing Turkey and all the Middle Eastern States with United Kingdom and United States participation," which varied significantly from State Department expectations, particularly regarding issues of focus (indigenous versus exogenous emphasis) and scope (Northern Tier versus entire Middle East and Arab world).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ DOS to US Embassy Cairo, 14 January 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 4. Dulles' fascinating though bizarre retrospective on these and other mistakes is in 373rd NSC Meeting, 24 July 1958, *FRUS 1958-60 XII* no. 31.

¹⁴⁷ J.E. Powell-Jones Memorandum, 2 November 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 558; COSC, 133rd Meeting, 22 December 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 564; C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute and A. Nutting Minute, PRO FO 371/115484 V1073/2, 3 January 1955; C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum, PRO FO 371/115484 V1073/26; FO Memorandum: "Turko-Iraqi Agreement," 17 January 1955, PRO FO 371/115484 V1073/33; Ashton, *Problem*, p. 45; Persson, pp. 152, 196; Podeh, *Quest*, p. 110. Dissent from prevailing 'cautious' Foreign Office attitudes is in J.F. Brewis Memorandum, 9 December 1954, and G.E. Millard Minute, 12 December 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 561.

¹⁴⁸ FO Memorandum: "Middle East Defence", 3 January 1955, PRO FO 371/115484 V1073/2; UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, PRO FO 371/115485 V1073/54; RMOH.

Reaping a Whirlwind: Dulles' Diplomatic Failure and Strategic Reorientation

1954, therefore, ended with confusion and disagreement. So Dulles' framework of cultivating regional stability to enhance containment might prosper, the State Department wanted Baghdad to maintain momentum on bilateral agreements with Turkey. After initially displaying enthusiasm, Nuri, to whom Britain had extended *carte blanche* on this issue, shifted to delaying tactics to ascertain the depth and significance of Arab opposition, and develop sufficient countermeasures, before agreeing to any treaty commitments.¹⁴⁹ In early 1955, this deadlock suddenly dissolved. American pressure and Anglo-Turkish negotiations convinced Iraq and Britain to proceed with Turko-Iraqi arrangements, once Nuri and the Foreign Office concluded Washington was willing and able to offset any Arab resistance which might arise as a result of Baghdad linking with Ankara.¹⁵⁰

Since their only significant objection to immediate progress had now dissipated, Iraqi and British leaders felt sufficiently comfortable to set aside their earlier chariness; soon thereafter Nuri consulted in Baghdad with Turkish representatives, and the joint communiqué resulting from these talks gave every appearance that some form of security agreement was imminent.¹⁵¹ In keeping with their stance at the Cairo conference from the previous December, Egyptian and Saudi representatives begged American and British officials to halt Nuri's discussions with his Turkish counterparts.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 12 January 1955, PRO FO 371/115484 V1073/11.

¹⁵⁰ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 12 January 1955, PRO FO 371/115485 V1073/55 & 56. J.E. Powell-Jones Memorandum, 7 January 1955, PRO FO 371/115484 V1073/5 outlines Anglo-Turkish negotiations. London needed assurances that any pact involving Iraq also protected British interests.

¹⁵¹ Ara Sinjian interprets and analyzes these talks. Herman Eilts, an American diplomat in Baghdad in 1955, allocates to Turkish officials primary responsibility for catalysing Turko-Iraqi security arrangements; see Eilts, p. 352. Conversely, Jamali takes credit for spurring Nuri toward consummating these arrangements (FJP, p. 589).

¹⁵² *Descent*, 4 & 10 February 1955, p. 249; US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 6 February 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 11; HBOH.

When their lobbying failed, not one but two alliances, and a whirlwind of controversy, emerged from the Baghdad negotiations: the Turko-Iraqi Pact,¹⁵³ a grouping that later expanded to include not only the founders but Britain, Pakistan, and Iran as well, and a rival coalition, the ‘ESS’, which brought together Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. This latter alliance enjoyed little in the way of common political or social traditions. Instead, a mutual threat—Hashemite hegemony—goaded these strange bedfellows into action. For at least a decade a fundamental strategic objective for Riyadh, Cairo, and Damascus was to prevent emergence of a ‘super-state’ under Iraqi, Jordanian, or British auspices, since an agglomeration of this sort at a minimum challenged their freedom of action while augmenting the power and influence of long-time adversaries.¹⁵⁴ Nasser, therefore, embarked upon a covert plan to obtain Soviet bloc weaponry in order to counter surging Anglo-Hashemite regional prowess.¹⁵⁵ For Syria, the stakes were of even greater import, since ‘Greater Hashem’ directly threatened its existence as an independent state. Although Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria did not formalise their alliance until late 1955, their mutual interest in countering Nuri’s latest intrigues materialised immediately after Turko-Iraqi negotiations in late January.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ I will subsequently use ‘Turko-Iraqi Pact’, ‘Baghdad Pact’, and ‘Pact’ interchangeably to describe this alliance.

¹⁵⁴ UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 28 March 1955, PRO FO 371/115504 V1073/637; Rathmell, p. 13; Maddy-Weitzman, p. 83; Dessouki, p. 36; Ara Sinjian. Persson, p. 203 and Elts, pp. 353-55 express bewilderment over Nasser’s resistance to Turko-Iraqi security arrangements. Egyptian strategy, however, naturally opposed any such ties, due to their implications in the ‘struggle for Syria.’ Persson seems to figure out this connection later in his book (pp. 312-14).

¹⁵⁵ Perhaps no issue regarding mid-1950s Middle Eastern historiography has caused more controversy than the timing and motivation of Nasser’s decision to accept Soviet bloc weaponry. Some historians, such as Raanan, Chapter Two, Ginat, pp. 206-211, Bar-On, p. 21, and D. Tal assert that Soviet-Egyptian contacts germinated in the early 1950s, and reached fruition immediately after Turko-Iraqi security arrangements coalesced in early 1955. Others, such as Sayed-Ahmed, p. 110, Podeh, “Neutrality,” and Alterman, maintain that Nasser actually preferred American weaponry, and only decided to pursue Soviet bloc transactions in mid-1955, after such events such as the February 1955 Gaza raid compelled him to move forward aggressively with augmentation of Egyptian military capabilities. Reconciling such disparate interpretations is difficult; I suspect that reality lies somewhere between these extremes. No doubt Turko-Iraqi security arrangements alienated Nasser; provocations such as the Gaza raid probably steeled his resolve to acquire weapons from any available source.

¹⁵⁶ NIE 30-55, 21 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 46 outlines ESS formation and motives.

The extreme tension that sprang from these negotiations threw Washington into confusion, which lasted two months.¹⁵⁷ At issue were important questions. Would the United States pressure Egypt and Saudi Arabia to cease and desist in their opposition to close Turko-Iraqi ties? Would the United States throw its full weight behind this new security arrangement either by joining it, or by sanctioning new Arab membership?

Containment, not consistency, served as Dulles' watchword in resolving these conundrums. He based his decisions on limiting Soviet opportunities and, in that context, decided that to sanction Turko-Iraqi Pact expansion, or to lend that organisation greater short-term prominence, would amplify intra-Arab and Arab-Israeli cleavages, thus assisting Moscow's efforts at regional penetration. A major influence on Dulles' calculations was State Department awareness of shifting Communist strategy. Instead of emphasising military force, a new Soviet offensive along diplomatic, economic, and political lines became apparent in 1955. The Kremlin now sought to build its Middle Eastern (and Third World) presence by offering assistance and support such as trade agreements, technology transfers, and arms sales at reduced prices.¹⁵⁸ These arrangements, in turn, provided entrée for Soviet advisors, enabling Moscow to influence the host nation's domestic and foreign policy. In tandem with what Washington perceived as a substantial increase in Soviet nuclear capability, this new stratagem appeared to pose a formidable challenge to American and British positions.

Dulles and Eisenhower therefore concluded the United States needed to blunt this threat and preserve Western influence, *even if doing so meant abandoning earlier political obligations and concepts*. In their estimation, an optimal counterstrategy

¹⁵⁷ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Tehran, 18 February 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 14, 239th NSC Meeting, 3 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 18, and DOS to US Embassy Islamabad, 18 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 27 illustrate American confusion during the Turko-Iraqi Pact's formative phases. See also Podeh, *Quest*, pp. 118-19.

alleviated those factors fuelling regional disgruntlement, thereby providing Middle Eastern states *less incentive* to turn to Moscow for help. To this end, downplaying any divisive phenomena was absolutely necessary, as was settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. A ‘strong’ Turko-Iraqi Pact, with open-ended possibilities for growth, ran directly counter to both policies, since augmenting this alliance correspondingly increased Egyptian, Saudi, Syrian, and Israeli alienation. British and Iraqi calculations stood in diametric opposition to Dulles’ new emphasis. London needed to protect Nuri from Nasser’s nationalist and pan-Arab attacks, while ensuring Pact survival since Anglo-Iraqi ties now existed in that context.

These divergencies in opinion and emphasis set the stage for serious Anglo-American policy disparities that intensified throughout 1955. Basically, all hinged on a single issue: would Western efforts give priority to containment or to Arch preservation? Before 1955, Washington and London essentially pursued both objectives without contradiction, but consummation of the Turko-Iraqi Pact rendered these goals mutually exclusive. To complicate matters, controversy re-emerged over responsibility for aiding Iraq. The secret Anglo-American memorandum of early 1954 temporarily assuaged this problem, but when Baghdad linked with Turkey, it erupted anew, inaugurating a fresh round of British anxiety about possible Mesopotamian displacement.

National Intelligence Estimate 11-4-54 of September 1954, and National Security Council Report 5501, which appeared immediately before a storm of controversy over Nuri’s arrangements with Turkey gripped the Arab world, marked Washington’s first acknowledgement of a Soviet shift toward “amiability and lure” and away from “imminent aggression.” These estimates predicted “resentment of imperialism...and extreme [Middle Eastern] nationalism” provided and enhanced opportunities Moscow

¹⁵⁸ McMahon, “Illusion,” describes changing American perspectives regarding Soviet tactics. See also

could easily exploit. In late January 1955, Dulles warned American diplomatic missions of imminent “Soviet bloc offers to provide technical assistance and equipment to less-developed countries.”¹⁵⁹ The parameters and specific nature of this Soviet change were at first unclear, however, and ongoing Kremlin power struggles contributed to further opaqueness.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, the State Department did not at first reorient American policy to any noticeable extent.

Initially, in fact, the White House considered guaranteeing the sanctity of Israeli borders to mitigate Tel Aviv’s trenchant criticism, and thus maintain momentum for regional defence arrangements.¹⁶¹ Dulles also demonstrated serious disappointment at Cairo and Riyadh for criticising Iraqi security initiatives.¹⁶² Saudi leaders had been particularly acrimonious in their denunciation of American complicity in linking Baghdad and Ankara; Faisal repeatedly attacked United States policy with “unwonted vehemence and deep bitterness.” Dulles regarded these reactions as overblown and unreasonable, and even contemplated punitive action against Saudi Arabia.¹⁶³ Other United States officials displayed similar resentment toward, and firmness against, Saudi Pact opposition, suggesting Dulles counsel Riyadh of American determination never to deviate from its support of Nuri’s security arrangements.¹⁶⁴ The Secretary concurred,

Kaufman, *Trade*, Chapter 4; Rostow, pp. 14-21; Gendzier; Persson, pp. 317-18; and Ginat, p. 184.

¹⁵⁹ Ginat, p. 209.

¹⁶⁰ NIE 11-4-54: “Soviet Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action Through Mid-1959”, 14 September 1954, in *History Staff Publication*; NSC Report 5501, 7 January 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 6. Ginat, pp. 205-6 explains early-1955 Kremlin power struggles, in which Nikita Khruschev defeated Georgi Malenkov, and immediately intensified Soviet efforts to broaden its Third World influence.

¹⁶¹ Levey.

¹⁶² UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 18 & 19 January 1955, PRO FO 371/115485 V1073/41 & 48.

¹⁶³ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 27 February 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 IX* no. 16. See also Podeh, *Quest*, pp. 129-30. 237th NSC Meeting, 17 February 1955, DDE:NSC Box 6 indicates that Washington even contemplated blockading Saudi Arabia.

¹⁶⁴ G. Allen to R. Murphy, 3 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 165.

informing Saudi leaders a significant shift in United States policy was “out of the question.”¹⁶⁵

His firm United States stance soon softened, for three reasons. First, late-February Israeli raids at Gaza necessitated some American gesture to soothe Arab outrage.¹⁶⁶ Second, Turko-Iraqi scheming vis-à-vis Syria materialised in dramatic fashion, lending credence to Arab fears over Hashemite territorial aggrandisement.¹⁶⁷ These intrigues—which persisted even after the State Department advised Baghdad in strong terms to abandon its Crescent dreams—demonstrated Faisal’s seeming paranoia was perhaps less pathological than first impressions had indicated.¹⁶⁸ Although the Foreign Office attributed to Zionist pressure Dulles’ late March fixation on including non-aggression clauses in the Pact charter, more probably his efforts related to fears regarding Syrian volatility, particularly his desire to avoid any external intervention there.¹⁶⁹ The prospect of Iraqi and Turkish tanks rolling into Damascus had little appeal, since such action

¹⁶⁵ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Jeddah, 5 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 166.

¹⁶⁶ B. Morris, Chapter Eleven, describes these raids. Shlaim, pp. 123-28 is also valuable.

¹⁶⁷ DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 17 February and 22 March 1955, reveal covert Turko-Iraqi operations in Syria in early 1955, including tactical disagreements between Ankara and Baghdad. Also valuable are Seale, pp. 233-35; US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 20 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 28; UK Embassy Ankara to FO, 28 March 1955, PRO FO 371/115504 V1073/643; J.F. Brewis to FO, 29 March 1955, PRO FO 371/115504 V1073/647; Little, “Covert”; Heikal, p. 71; Avedis Sanjian; and “Iraqi-Turkish Pact,” *MEJ* Volume IX no. 1 (1955).

¹⁶⁸ G. Allen to J.F. Dulles, 1 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 33; J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Baghdad, 13 April 1955; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 14 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 293; J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Damascus, 13 April 1955; DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 15 April 1955; US Embassy Damascus to DOS, 16 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 294; Rathmell, p. 95; Saunders, p. 43; Podeh, *Quest*, p. 145. Baghdad tried through dissemblage to gain Dulles’ support for an Iraqi occupation of Syria, but he curtly dismissed these schemes as “very dangerous” and tending to “jeopardize [the] entire structure [of] Middle East relations which Iraq as well as the United States hopes [to] see built.” In his memoirs (p. 160) Gallman downplays Iraqi ambitions in Syria in Spring 1955; Podeh, *Quest*, p. 135 espouses a similar line. However, reconciling these statements with contemporary documents—such as DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 14 and 29 April 1955, in which Iraqi officials advocate direct military intervention in Syria—is difficult. US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 17 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 45 and J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Damascus, 30 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 298 show that the challenge of defusing Syrian-Iraqi tension persisted (later emerging with a vengeance) in American policy-making circles. See also Lesch, *Syria*, pp. 66-67.

¹⁶⁹ UK Embassy Ankara to FO, 28 March 1955; C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, I. Kirkpatrick Minute, A. Eden Minute, 30 March 1955, PRO FO 371/115505 V1073/648; G.G. Arthur Memorandum, 31 March 1955, PRO FO 371/115505 V1073/649; DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 2 April 1955. Shuckburgh thought American interest in explicit non-aggression pledges represented “an almost blatant piece of Israeli pressure exercised through State Department lawyers...”

might inflame Arab nationalism, inflict public relations damage on the Free World, and give Moscow a golden opportunity for regional entrée.

This last factor also constituted Dulles' third reason for modifying his Pact stance. The scope of Soviet efforts among ESS members, particularly Syria, became more evident.¹⁷⁰ Displaying outright antagonism toward the Egyptian-Saudi-Syrian grouping would only spark contrarian instincts toward tighter cooperation among these three states and enhance Moscow's appeal, while estranging large segments of Arab public opinion as well.¹⁷¹ American policy soon reflected this transition in United States policy. Dulles did not abandon his Northern Tier concept, but emphasis now rested on this paradigm's original incarnation as an entity only peripherally involved in Arab affairs.¹⁷² By moving 'back to basics' and deflecting Pact energy and momentum northward, perhaps the State Department could rescue regional security arrangements from the crucible of Arab politics. Dulles also wanted to demonstrate to Cairo and Riyadh that United States policy sought neither their downfall nor Hashemite hegemony.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ As early as Summer 1954, American officials described increasing Soviet activity in Syria (US Embassy Damascus to DOS, 30 August 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 878), but these efforts did not reach fruition until Spring 1955, when Moscow offered military, economic, and diplomatic aid to Syria (CIA to J.F. Dulles, 25 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 221). See also Seale, pp. 178, 234.

¹⁷¹ US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 8 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 22 shows American attitudes in transition, while J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Ankara, 29 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XXIV* no. 322 and J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Cairo, 31 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 60 demonstrate that Dulles' position had crystallised by late March.

¹⁷² Memcon: J.F. Dulles, G. Allen, J.W. Jernegan, and F. Russell, 24 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 55 and J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Cairo, 30 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 30 clearly illustrate Dulles' decisive shift toward the 'original' Northern Tier, while DOS to Embassy Islamabad, 28 May 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 39 shows his continuing commitment to regional security arrangements. NSC Statement of US Objectives and Policies in the Near East, 23 July 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* no. 219 describes initial American perspectives regarding the Northern Tier, noting the importance of "limiting these defense arrangements to Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq." Lloyd, pp. 27, 36 condemns Dulles' 'northern focus' for "wanting to have it both ways," and castigates Washington for "promoting and welcoming the Pact but refus[ing] to join." Ashton, *Problem*, pp. 48-51 describes Dulles' strategic re-appraisal in Spring 1955.

¹⁷³ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Ankara, 26 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 29; Thacher, p. 69; Lesch, *Syria*, p. 53; Dickie, p. 91. Amplifying a trend that started in mid-March (DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 15 March 1955), Dulles' efforts to improve Saudi-American relations yielded moderate success over the next few months.

To substantiate his new policy, Dulles shifted decisively away from any support for American Pact membership. For months the Secretary had vacillated on this issue, noting some advantages in accession but tending toward a negative stance primarily because of his earnest attempt to present the Northern Tier as a native development.¹⁷⁴ In the short run at least, he wanted to minimise not only American but also French involvement—for France to join might undercut the Pact’s indigenous character in a particularly pernicious way, given the grim history of French Middle Eastern and North African colonialism.¹⁷⁵ By late March, however, his equivocation had ended. The United States would not join; nor would Israel receive any commitment guaranteeing its boundaries.¹⁷⁶ Dulles wanted to rise above the fray; taking sides, or even appearing to take sides, in Hashemite-ESS or Arab-Israeli strife removed any chance of resolving these disputes in a way denying Moscow regional access.¹⁷⁷ That Washington and London had recently launched Project *Alpha*, a secret initiative to gain Israeli and Egyptian cooperation for settling their disagreements, lent additional impetus to his quest for thorough impartiality.¹⁷⁸ Dulles’ April 1955 decision to place additional focus on

¹⁷⁴ DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 15 February 1955; J.F. Dulles to Certain Diplomatic Missions, 15 February 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 13. US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 16 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 IX* no. 24 outlines some advantages regarding American Pact accession; Dulles apparently assessed the disadvantages as more compelling.

¹⁷⁵ UK Embassy Paris to FO, 3 March 1955, PRO FO 371/115504 V1073/638; Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 112. Realising how deeply London valued the Turko-Iraqi Pact as an instrument to “regularize Anglo-Iraqi relations,” the State Department did not obstruct British accession—see DOS to US Embassy Islamabad, 28 May 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 39—although American officials did not “encourage” London to join, as Heikal, p. 71 alleges.

¹⁷⁶ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Ankara, 2 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XXIV* no. 322; Levey. Watt, p. 71 presumably refers to Dulles’ decision for non-accession when he alleges that in 1955 the United States abandoned Britain mid-stream.

¹⁷⁷ US Embassy Tel Aviv to DOS, 5 May 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 87; FROH; RHOH/I.

¹⁷⁸ *Descent*, 7 March 1955, p. 252; J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Cairo, 31 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 32. FO to DOS and DOS to FO, 5 & 17 November 1954, *FRUS 1952-54 IX* nos. 916 and 920 trace *Alpha*’s initiation. Caplan has a fine analysis regarding *Alpha*’s origin, evolution, and ultimate failure. FROH; Takeyh, “Pan-Arabism” Chapter Five, especially pp. 204-218; Freiberger, Chapter Five; Shamir, pp. 81-92; Hobbs, pp. 56-62; and Bar-On, pp. 86-91 are also valuable. Oren, “Secret” claims that *Alpha*’s “ultimate purpose” was to facilitate a Middle East defence organisation; I contend that *Alpha*’s ultimate purpose was to enhance containment. As Persson, pp. 222, 334 observes, Dulles’ decision simultaneously to pursue regional defence arrangements and *Alpha* represented a strategic blunder of large proportions. Dulles probably perceived these efforts as complementary—bolstering the Northern Tier with American

*Alpha*¹⁷⁹ was, in fact, perfectly commensurate with his newly-modified Middle Eastern approach, which emphasised expedient resolution of regional discord to counter accelerating Soviet involvement there.

If Anglo-American collaboration regarding *Alpha* represented exemplary intra-alliance cooperation, Dulles' clarification of the American 'northern focus' for Middle Eastern defence arrangements showed Washington and London had major strategic differences as well. Since Anglo-Iraqi ties now rested on an annexure to Britain's formal membership in the Turko-Iraqi Pact—an annexure reflecting the "continued existence of vestigial British rights" in Iraq, and which Nuri had slyly massaged through the Iraqi Parliament to steal a march on domestic opposition—the Foreign Office had overwhelming incentives to keep that coalition alive.¹⁸⁰ Contrary to American suggestions, London planned to engage and destroy ESS before that organisation reached fruition, so that it would not "eventually provide a dangerous alternative attraction for Iraqi nationalists."¹⁸¹

Also, although Sir Ralph Stevenson, British Ambassador to Egypt, held views remarkably similar to those of Dulles, in the main British leaders sought neither to limit

aid, while stabilising southern regions via an Arab-Israeli settlement—but obviously miscalculated the negative synergy between these two objectives. See also Eveland, p. 125. Carlton, p. 383 asserts (while citing no evidence) that Dulles may have emphasised *Alpha* to escape any Turko-Iraqi Pact commitments, an assessment with which British leaders concurred; see also Shamir, note 57. Pappe, "Egypt" p. 166 contends that London focused on *Alpha* in Spring 1955 in preparation for Pact expansion; Britain needed to mollify Nasser and *Alpha* was its device.

¹⁷⁹ Hahn, *Egypt*, p. 190.

¹⁸⁰ Under Articles 1, 5, and 8 of Britain's 4 April 1955 Turko-Iraqi Pact accession, a five-year 'Special Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Iraq' replaced their 1932 Treaty, stipulating "[Anglo-Iraqi] cooperat[ion] for their security and defence in accordance with this pact of mutual cooperation." *MEA* Vol. VI no. 5 (1955) provides this agreement's full text, including subsequent exchange of notes; PRO CAB 128 (55) 30th Conclusions, 30 March 1955 is also significant. Thacher, p. 68 discusses "vestigial British rights in Iraq." See also Persson, pp. 241-43, Eilts, p. 352, and Ara Sinjian.

¹⁸¹ G.G. Arthur Minute, 12 April 1955, PRO FO 371/115504 V1073/637; G.G. Arthur Memorandum, 23 April 1955, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 637; Persson, p. 213; Podeh, *Quest*, p. 159.

Pact focus to a specific direction, nor freeze membership.¹⁸² To do so might jeopardise Pact survival. Britain wanted Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese, and American membership, and the Foreign Office became disappointed when Washington did not support these ambitions.¹⁸³ The State Department countered by suggesting Iranian accession; success on this front offered to enhance Dulles' plan for 'northern focus'.¹⁸⁴ Since the Foreign Office perceived northern orientation as a diversion from more important issues such as additional Arab affiliation, London greeted this idea coolly.¹⁸⁵

British and American officials temporarily overcame their differences regarding Arab accession by agreeing to an ambiguous Pact moratorium, but the issues of United States membership and United States regional assistance plagued Anglo-American relations with ever-growing intensity as the extent of Moscow's new offensive became increasingly apparent.¹⁸⁶ Soviet tendrils first probed Syria and Egypt, and by Summer 1955 had spread to Saudi Arabia as well. When American officials slowly came to realise the Kremlin's offensive had assumed diplomatic forms, they began shifting away from primarily military considerations, in favour of a broader political dimension.¹⁸⁷ To counter Soviet subversion, Eisenhower and Dulles considered infusions of American aid

¹⁸² UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 9 March 1955; Undated A. Eden Minute, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 582; UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 28 March 1955; A. Eden to R. Makins, 31 March 1955, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 589; FO to UK Embassy Cairo, 27 April 1955, PRO FO 371/115504 V1073/637; M. Wright Memorandum, 17 May 1955, PRO FO 371/115759 VQ1051/99; FO to UK Embassy Ankara, 22 July 1955, PRO FO 371/115516 V1073/945; E.M. Rose Memorandum, 6 August 1955; I. Kirkpatrick to DOS, 8 August 1955, PRO FO 371/115517 V1073/981; Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and G. Allen, 13 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 91; Undated L.A.C. Fry Minute, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 637. By late May 1955, Stevenson had abandoned his 'accommodationist' position on ESS, and henceforth his views reflected mainstream Foreign Office opinion; see UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 23 May 1955, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 592.

¹⁸³ DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 2 April 1955.

¹⁸⁴ J.F. Dulles to C. Wilson, 27 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 314; DOS Position Paper: "Middle East Defense", 11 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 56.

¹⁸⁵ UK Embassy Beirut to FO, 7 & 11 May 1955; R.M. Hadow Minute, 17 May 1955, PRO FO 371/115511 V1073/801; UK Embassy Paris to FO, 23 May 1955, PRO FO 371/115512 V1073/832.

¹⁸⁶ DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 8 April 1955. Memcon: H. Hoover and R. Makins, 11 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 60 contains post facto British clarification of the moratorium on Arab accession: Whitehall favoured maintaining this freeze until Pakistan and Iran joined, Makins explained.

¹⁸⁷ FWOH/I; 247th NSC Meeting, 5 May 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 36; FO Minute, 14 June 1955, PRO FO 371/115513 V1073/858.

to Cairo and Riyadh. At minimum, they sought to authorise Saudi and Egyptian purchases of United States military equipment, thereby avoiding any impression that Moscow offered these nations their only recourse on defence requirements. In late spring the Saudi government petitioned Washington, seeking approval for purchase of various hardware including M-41 tanks. Cairo made similar requests, hoping to secure a multi-million dollar arms deal with the United States. These overtures seemed to present an optimal Western venue for undercutting any Soviet opportunities in the Arabian Peninsula, and minimising Egyptian incentives to accept support from Moscow.¹⁸⁸

Since London ranked preservation of its Hashemite-Gulf Arch above containment, however, British officials “viewed with a jaundiced eye” any such programme, consistent with their earlier opposition to similar initiatives. The Foreign Office disparaged King Saud’s “anti-Hashemite bias,” actively opposed State Department efforts to consummate a Saudi-Iraqi rapprochement, and deplored Saudi “pursu[it] of an expansionist policy against Persian Gulf sheikhdoms.” Similarly, Nasser’s “gross impertinence” and “intolerable” position in the Anglo-Saudi dispute over Eastern Arabian boundaries made Eden furious. Since late 1954, British officials had acknowledged shifting Soviet tactics, noting a new emphasis on “subversion, as opposed to overt attack...[the Kremlin] is most unlikely to provoke war deliberately [and] risks of a major war will probably continue to recede.”¹⁸⁹ London, like Washington, predicted Moscow would seek to exploit Middle Eastern nationalism, but unlike their American counterparts, British leaders intended to checkmate this force by emphasising “efficient

¹⁸⁸ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 20 June and 5 July 1955; H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 11 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 57. As on the subject of Nasser’s rationale and timing for seeking Soviet weaponry (see note 155 *supra*), historians are divided regarding Egyptian motives for requesting American support in mid-1955. Those arguing that Nasser made an early and irrevocable decision to cast his lot with Moscow generally interpret his bid for Western assistance as a mere ruse, to generate tactical cover for incipient Egyptian-Soviet arms deals (Raanan, p. 44; Ginat, p. 218), while those who contend Nasser accepted Communist assistance only as a last resort contend that his efforts to get United States aid were sincere (Sayed-Ahmed, p. 110; Alterman; Podeh, *Quest*, p. 162).

and well-trained police forces and good security intelligence...to prevent trouble arising.”¹⁹⁰ Along these lines, Britain preferred using American aid to support Arch keystone Iraq, instead of assisting those who struggled against the Hashemite-Gulf Arch.¹⁹¹ Western material and political support for Baghdad would sustain Nuri against domestic dissent and foreign criticism, enhance Pact prestige, and increase its appeal to non-member Arab states.¹⁹²

However, even this issue entailed sufficient ambiguity to cause tension, as the Foreign Office only countenanced such aid in the context of British domination of Iraq’s security requirements, despite specific Iraqi requests for United States assistance.¹⁹³ Many in the British government thought secret 1954 agreements allocating London preponderant responsibility in Iraq were inadequate to preserve for Britain an exclusive Mesopotamian sphere; more assertive measures had become necessary to insure Washington “play a minor and not major role in [Iraq’s] future...we must hold the trump cards.”¹⁹⁴ Therefore, constraining United States assistance within ‘offshore procurement’

¹⁸⁹ Cabinet Defence Committee Memorandum, 23 December 1954, *BDEEP:CG&EE I* no. 17.

¹⁹⁰ JPS Report, 22 December 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 563; FO Memorandum, 29 December 1954, *BDEEP:CG&EE I* no. 18

¹⁹¹ PRO CAB 134/1086 OME (55) 12th Report, 12 May 1955; Memcon: H. Hoover, R. Murphy, R. Makins, and R. Bailey, 24 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 51; T.E. Bromley Memorandum, 24 June 1955, PRO FO 371/113608 JE1051/7A; H. Macmillan Memorandum, 29 June 1955; A. Eden Minute, 8 July 1955, PRO FO 371/113608 JE1051/8. See also S. Lucas, *Roar*, p. 14, Ashton, *Problem*, p. 52, and Kyle, pp. 109-14. Cabinet Paper, 15 February 1954, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 491 outlines earlier British objections to American assistance to Riyadh. US Embassy Beirut to DOS, 17 February 1955, USNA RG 59 686A.87/2-1755, US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 22 March 1955, USNA RG 59 686A.87/3-2255, and US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 16 April 1955, USNA RG 59 686A.87/4-1655 outline tentative DOS planning for Saudi-Iraqi rapprochement; this scheme matured in 1956. UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 25 May 1955, PRO FO 371/115512 V1073/849, G.G. Arthur and R.M. Hadow Minutes, 21 June 1955, and FO Minute, 22 June 1955, PRO FO 371/115513 V1073/877 illustrate Foreign Office resistance. Arthur thought rapprochement “is not to be desired.”

¹⁹² A.A.D. Montague-Brown Minute, 24 May 1955, PRO FO 371/115759 VQ1051/99; Memcon: J.F. Dulles, H. Macmillan, F. Russell, C.A.E. Shuckburgh, 14 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 158; J.F. Dulles to DOS, 17 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 161; C.A.E. Shuckburgh to R. Makins, 2 September 1955, PRO FO 371/115586 V1193/100G.

¹⁹³ H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 19 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 163; Memcon: DOS, DOD, and CIA Representatives, 27 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 172.

¹⁹⁴ FO to UK Embassy Washington, 28 February 1955, PRO FO 371/115751 VQ1051/25; C.A.E. Shuckburgh to H. Parker, 1 March 1955, PRO FO 371/115751 VQ1051/20; H. Fraser to A. Eden, 8 March

became an important objective for Eden's Cabinet. This form of acquisition—in which Foreign Office and Defence Ministry planners used American money to purchase British equipment, then distributed this material in Iraq—appealed strongly, because United States military missions would have no reason to establish an Iraqi presence if Britain retained responsibility for all aspects of Iraqi resupply beyond funding. Baghdad's dependence on British spare parts and logistical support would also persist.¹⁹⁵ As this issue gained greater urgency throughout the spring of 1955, London decided Anglo-American disclosure to Iraqi leaders of the 1954 memorandum had become crucial, to dissuade these officials from requesting United States aid.¹⁹⁶

In mid-summer, this troublesome issue converged with *Alpha*, when Dulles decided to announce publicly Western efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute.¹⁹⁷ To ensure British objectives enjoyed equal status with those of the United States, Eden's Cabinet demanded a price for its support, in the form of a dual commitment: American leaders agree to join the Turko-Iraqi Pact within the foreseeable future, and make substantial funds available for Iraq's offshore procurement of eighty Centurion tanks.¹⁹⁸ Difficult negotiations followed; Eisenhower and Dulles showed no interest in explicit promises regarding Pact accession—they indicated American affiliation would at best occur only after a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement—and were only mildly

1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/1; J.E. Powell-Jones Memorandum, 19 April 1955, PRO FO 371/115759 VQ1051/195; Devereaux, p. 165.

¹⁹⁵ UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 11 August 1955, PRO FO 371/115518 V1073/983.

¹⁹⁶ Memcon: H. Hoover, R. Murphy, R. Makins, and R. Bailey, 24 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 51. According to Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 121, British officials informed Baghdad of the Anglo-American MOU in April 1955.

¹⁹⁷ Freiberger, pp. 119-121 holds that rumours over Soviet involvement with Egypt, and new indications of Arab intractability regarding negotiations with Israel, compelled Dulles to move forward aggressively with his 'publicity' plan regarding an Arab-Israeli settlement. See also Hobbs, p. 71.

¹⁹⁸ *Descent*, 15 & 20 July 1955, pp. 269, 271; PRO CAB 128 (55) 27th Conclusions, 28 July 1955.

enthusiastic about using American funds in an area where London demanded primary responsibility.¹⁹⁹

The State Department also had grave misgivings about one-sided support for Hashemite states at a point when Moscow's political offensive had recently moved into a more intense phase.²⁰⁰ Massive infusions of American aid to Iraq gave Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt additional incentive to turn to the Kremlin for support. Finally, provisioning Iraq with heavy equipment might sabotage the 'honest broker' position Dulles wanted to establish for the United States, to increase *Alpha*'s chances of success.²⁰¹ Thus, the Secretary faced a real dilemma: securing British support for this initiative diminished its odds of success vis-à-vis Israeli cooperation. Although some American officials recommended giving precedence to an all-out effort for immediate settlement of Arab-Israeli differences, Dulles compromised, choosing to fund Iraqi offshore procurement on a limited scale, while simultaneously granting Riyadh's request to purchase American equipment, and considering similar arrangements for Egypt and Israel.²⁰²

Eisenhower strongly supported this 'halfway' solution—which, incidentally, fell short in meeting Israeli concerns over Western partiality—but Eden and Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan thought Dulles' offer woefully inadequate and resented his

¹⁹⁹ H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 21 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 168; DOS Memorandum, 26 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 171; Memcon: D. Eisenhower and J.F. Dulles, 11 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 188; J.F. Dulles to R. Makins, 19 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 61. J.F. Dulles to Certain Diplomatic Missions, 11 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 59 shows that Anglo-American negotiations on this issue became quite contentious.

²⁰⁰ Memcon: DOS, DOD, and CIA Representatives, 27 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 172; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and L.B. Johnson, 21 August 1955, JFD:GCMS Box 1; *Economist*, 8 October 1955, p. 102.

²⁰¹ F. Wilkins to F. Russell, 10 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 187.

²⁰² J.F. Dulles to C. Wilson, 4 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 172. US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 11 September 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 64 shows that Ambassador Henry Byroade advocated with growing intensity his belief that *Alpha* outweighed the Northern Tier in terms of immediate strategic value.

attempts to “rush” Britain into public support for *Alpha*.²⁰³ They were also upset at Washington’s steadfast opposition to American Pact membership. Despite these disappointments, and Eden’s basic distaste for using public statements to catalyse the Arab-Israeli peace process, his Cabinet decided not to impede Dulles’ initiative.²⁰⁴ A few American-funded Centurions were better than none at all, since the United States seemed determined to press ahead with efforts to reach an Arab-Israeli settlement regardless of Britain’s stance. Also, since London gained a small victory from *Alpha* preliminaries in the form of Washington’s reaffirmation of its commitment to respect British preponderance in Iraq, British officials had additional incentive to play along, despite their consternation at Dulles’ disappointing offer.²⁰⁵

By late August, when the Secretary had cleared most major hurdles preparatory to his public declaration of American interest in initiating a round of Arab-Israeli peace talks, Moscow’s political offensive had reaped significant ESS dividends and showed no sign of diminution.²⁰⁶ As before, Syria seemed to pose the greatest danger of gravitating toward a Soviet orbit.²⁰⁷ Damascus was, however, not the only Middle Eastern trouble spot; Communist envoys accelerated their aggressive courtship for Egyptian and Saudi favour, requesting in late July formal diplomatic representation in Riyadh, and as a sweetener, simultaneously offering substantial military assistance.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ H. Macmillan to R. Makins, 20 August 1955, PRO FO 371/115586 V1193/97C; Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 124.

²⁰⁴ H. Macmillan to J.F. Dulles, 20 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 203; *Descent*, 5 October 1955, p. 288.

²⁰⁵ Memcon: H. Hoover and R. Makins, 11 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 60. Several authors, including Parker, p. 104 and Oren, “Secret” assert that Dulles’ speech effectively terminated Anglo-American cooperation on *Alpha*. Strictly speaking, this is inaccurate, since British and American diplomats continued *Alpha* discussions well after this speech (see, for example, Shamir, p. 95). However, these authors may be correct in that *Alpha*’s basic context changed so significantly that for all practical purposes it died in late August 1955.

²⁰⁶ Dulles delivered his speech on 26 August 1955; *MEA* Vol. VI nos. 8-9 (1955) pp. 270-73 has the full text.

²⁰⁷ 255th NSC Meeting, 14 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 301; *Descent*, 30 August 1955, p. 275.

²⁰⁸ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 5 July, 26 July, 8 August, 12 August, and 18 August 1955; Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 25 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 169; FO Report, February 1956, *BDEEP:CG&EE I* no. 87.

Although Saudi leaders privately conveyed to Washington their unease regarding Soviet overtures, Nasser seemed positively exuberant about his prospects now that an alternative to Western support had appeared. He hinted with increasing frequency and directness his intention to accept East Bloc arms if Western powers ignored his defence needs.²⁰⁹ American leaders, who viewed Moscow's prospects for ESS success more gravely than did their British counterparts, tried to keep Riyadh from wavering by warning Saudi leaders that increasing Soviet influence might correspondingly accelerate "disruptive forces" in their kingdom, including an upsurge of "local Communist activity."²¹⁰ To reinforce this counsel, the State Department carried through its plan to authorise Saudi purchase of United States military equipment, including ammunition and various other ordnance.²¹¹ Dulles and Eisenhower also undertook to overcome a frustrating bureaucratic impasse and resource shortages which had to date prevented Egypt from receiving anything beyond negligible quantities of Western material and military support. They feared that if Egypt could not obtain American equipment, Nasser "might buy [from] the Soviet Union."²¹²

²⁰⁹ Nasser's first direct warnings came in mid-June; see DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 15 June 1955 and Box 89, 20 June 1955. Trevelyan, p. 26 and Egyptian Information Administration Press Release, 9 November 1955 are also helpful.

²¹⁰ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Jeddah, 25 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 170.

²¹¹ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 30 August 1955; DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 3 September 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 172; *MEJ* Volume X no. 3 (1955) p. 294. To avoid an impression that American concern for Saudi interests resulted strictly from Moscow's recent offers, State Department officials downplayed any linkages between these Soviet activities and American authorisation to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia.

²¹² H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 21 July 1955, JFD:DOS Box 44; DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 29 July and 8 August 1955; Memcon: D. Eisenhower and J.F. Dulles, 5 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 182. Hoopes, p. 326 and Ashton, *Problem*, p. 54 suggest Western officials probably thought Nasser's involvement with Moscow represented mere "bluff." These documents seem to indicate otherwise, although Dulles warned Egyptian diplomats of American reluctance to "further a [regional] arms race." J.F. Dulles to R. Makins, 15 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 191 illustrates how resource shortages plagued American foreign policy at this time. See also Caplan, p. 125, Eveland, p. 135, Sayed-Ahmed, p. 109, and Copeland, p. 132. The latter attributes American procrastination to "pure bureaucracy," while Sayed-Ahmed attributes American delays to Israeli pressure.

That these American initiatives did not find favour in London should not have surprised the White House.²¹³ American assistance to Saudi Arabia made British officials “unhappy” since such aid lent Riyadh prestige, and had “a bad effect on neighbouring Arab states.”²¹⁴ These “neighbouring Arab states” of such concern to Eden’s Cabinet were, of course, components in the Hashemite-Gulf Arch. Nor did London show any sign of changing its negative position regarding a new conduit of Western equipment and support to Cairo, since Nasser “was not cooperating in defence matters.”²¹⁵

No End of Crises: The Divisive Legacies of Nasser’s Arms Deal

This difference between British and American objectives may have persisted indefinitely had Nasser not announced in late September his intention to conclude a major military transaction with Czechoslovakia.²¹⁶ Cairo’s ‘Czech’ arms deal certainly came as no surprise—Dulles, Eisenhower, and British leaders had known for months of intense Soviet activity in Egypt—but this transaction certainly underscored Moscow’s increasing success in its political offensive and, as such, threw American policy into absolute chaos.²¹⁷ State Department efforts to emphasise a ‘northern focus’ for Middle Eastern security, and thereby distance the United States from regional rivalries, had as yet borne no fruit. The Kremlin now exercised major influence in Syrian and Egyptian affairs, and, despite numerous American exhortations, promises, and pledges, Saudi Arabia had not yet openly denounced Soviet offers of weaponry, a problem of “particular concern” to Dulles.²¹⁸

²¹³ Memcon: D. Eisenhower, J.F. Dulles, A. Eden, H. Macmillan, 20 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 V* no. 199.

²¹⁴ Memcon: H. Hoover and R. Makins, 11 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 60.

²¹⁵ Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and F. Russell, 20 September 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 288. On the eve of Nasser’s momentous ‘Czech’ arms deal, Shuckburgh opposed the “idea of offering arms to Egypt.”

²¹⁶ *Economist*, 1 October 1955, p. 20.

²¹⁷ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 20 July and 16 August 1955; H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 21 July 1955, JFD:DOS Box 44; *Descent*, 26 September 1955, pp. 280-81; and Copeland, pp. 133, 142 describe American forewarning regarding Egyptian-Soviet arms negotiations.

²¹⁸ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 14 September 1955; DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 14 September 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 174.

The deleterious consequences of wholesale ESS defection to Moscow threatened American global strategy at its most fundamental level. Soviet footholds beyond the Northern Tier, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula, would eviscerate containment and enable the Kremlin to obtain control of crucial Cold War resources.²¹⁹ Dulles accordingly took a “grave view” of Nasser’s *fait accompli*.²²⁰ Although the Secretary clearly understood the implications of Moscow’s stunning diplomatic victory, after a brief equivocation²²¹ he concluded the best American response was to avoid an over-reaction, “quiet down” the situation, and make minor adjustments at most.²²²

His decision for patience owed to two factors. First, Eisenhower’s incapacitation in late September due to heart problems triggered an American constitutional crisis precisely as details of the Egyptian deal became available. Andrew Goodpaster, Eisenhower’s principal military assistant at that time, notes that the Presidential absence plunged Washington into confusion.²²³ During his Secretaryship, Dulles undoubtedly developed and implemented many programmes, but was no Svengali. Understanding that responsibility for American foreign policy ultimately rested in Eisenhower’s hands, Dulles was reluctant to embark on any major strategic reorientation—particularly on such an important issue—while the United States Commander in Chief struggled to regain his health. Perhaps Washington needed to reorient policy, but Dulles thought thorough review should precede any such shift.

²¹⁹ J.F. Dulles Memorandum, 17 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 69; 262nd NSC Meeting, 20 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 345. McMahon, “Illusion” contends American leaders exaggerated the importance of the ‘Czech’ arms deal; Moscow’s Egyptian initiative represented a mere “defensive response” to Anglo-American regional security programmes such as the Northern Tier, he argues. The breadth of Soviet activity—including offers of economic and military assistance to all ESS members—seems to indicate otherwise. See also Louis, “Dissolution” p. 342.

²²⁰ Memcon: W. Knowland and J.F. Dulles, 30 September 1955, JFD:GCMS Box 1.

²²¹ George Allen’s late-September mission to Cairo represented Dulles’ equivocation. G. Allen to H. Byroade, 15 November 1956, GAP Box 3, describes this disaster, including discussion of State-CIA tension over that mission. See also DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 20 September 1955.

²²² Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 3 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 323; *Descent*, 3 October 1955, p. 287; Takeyh, “Pan-Arabism” p. 241.

A lack of short-term options also compelled Dulles to a conservative approach. Soon after Nasser's transaction came to light, the Secretary learned reversing this deal probably exceeded American capabilities.²²⁴ In any event, dramatic ripostes, such as sponsoring a major allocation of military assistance for Israel, or isolating Nasser, could only magnify Western problems and facilitate additional opportunities for the Kremlin.²²⁵ Most likely, extending a major counter-offer to Israel or undertaking some other desperate regional measure—like rapid Turko-Iraqi Pact expansion—in a blatant attempt to offset Communist gains would paradoxically encourage Soviet adventurism by demonstrating the effectiveness of Moscow's tactics to date.²²⁶ Dulles, realising Soviet efforts in the Middle East could very likely “intensify and expand,” hoped to delay this threatening trend until he and Eisenhower could formulate an effective response.²²⁷ That American positions had sustained damage was obvious, but Dulles did not want United States policy to become a captive of this recent defeat. Instead, he would staunch the bleeding, allocate resources for future opportunities, forestall Israeli ambitions for pre-emptive strikes against Egypt, and, while waiting for Eisenhower's return, move forward cautiously on existing initiatives, such as *Alpha* and an ongoing State Department programme to keep Moscow from expanding its influence into Saudi Arabia.²²⁸

²²³ AGI. Eisenhower, *Mandate*, Chapter 22 is also significant.

²²⁴ 260th NSC Meeting, 6 October 1955, DDE:NSC Box 7.

²²⁵ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 26 September 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 310; *Descent*, 30 October 1955, p. 294; Ashton, *Problem*, p. 55.

²²⁶ *Descent*, 27 September 1955, p. 281.

²²⁷ DOS Memorandum, 3 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 36. See also DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 13 October 1955, in which Dulles outlines his interest in forestalling additional Soviet penetration of Syria.

²²⁸ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and P. Dixon, 23 September 1955, JFD:GCMS Box 1; 260th NSC Meeting, 6 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 326 and *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 66; DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 11 October 1955; 261st NSC Meeting, 13 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 68; NSC Memorandum, 28 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 X* no. 10; Memcon: D. Eisenhower, J.F. Dulles, R. Anderson, 11 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XV* no. 14. The two accounts of 260th NSC Meeting contain separate aspects of that meeting. *XII* no. 66, for instance, describes Dulles' plan to allocate additional American resources for the Middle East, and his opposition to Iranian accession, while *XIV* no. 326 focuses on Soviet arms offers to Syria and Saudi Arabia. Dulles' Middle Eastern resource allocation programme emerged two months after the 'Czech' arms deal; see *ST*, 4 & 18 December 1955, p. 9, p. 1.

Here he encountered friction with his British allies. Shortly after Nasser announced East Bloc-Egyptian military arrangements, Dulles impressed upon Saudi leaders the “extreme danger” of concluding any deals with Soviet representatives; when King Saud sought additional purchases of American armour, Dulles informed his National Security Council colleagues of the “great importance” he attached to complying with this request, since Saudi Arabia otherwise “might go elsewhere” to satisfy its military requirements, a la Nasser. However, British officials requested Dulles provide Riyadh with “little and late” support, if any at all.²²⁹ For London, the Czech arms deal posed danger not so much from a containment perspective, but rather that the prestige of the Turko-Iraqi Pact might suffer.²³⁰ Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, after all, tightened their connections to contest Baghdad’s links with Turkey and the West, so their success in securing major external support marked a triumph at Iraqi expense. Continued ESS political victories might compel Nuri to leave the Pact or, even worse, lead to his eclipse, thereby threatening the Hashemite-Gulf Arch.

Because the Foreign Office wanted to neutralise this setback to Hashemite fortunes, British officials began planning counterblows.²³¹ Macmillan pressed Dulles to solidify United States affiliation with the Turko-Iraqi Pact, since American membership would explicitly restore Pact stature while implicitly strengthening Nuri.²³² The Iraqi government appealed directly to Dulles as well, requesting Washington’s immediate adherence.²³³ The Foreign Office also suggested “depart[ing] from our previous cautious [Iranian] policy.” Although “striking while the iron is hot” in Tehran offered less

²²⁹ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Jeddah, 30 September 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 178; DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 6 October 1955; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and R. Makins, 6 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 327.

²³⁰ Copeland, p. 143.

²³¹ H. Macmillan Memorandum, 6 October 1956, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/12. PRO CAB 128 (55) 34th Conclusions, 4 October 1955 outlines top-level British planning in this regard.

²³² Macmillan, pp. 635-36, 638, 640.

²³³ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and M. Shabandar, 20 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 70.

tangible benefits than American membership, securing Iranian accession nonetheless seemed to boost Pact prestige.²³⁴

Such overt responses to Soviet success ran counter to Dulles' conclusion that the White House should avoid drastic measures, since these might exacerbate an already unfavourable situation. Therefore, Dulles disagreed with British proposals, just as he opposed Nuri's decision to resurrect his 'Fertile Crescent' ambitions in Syria.²³⁵ Such action, he thought, could cause "serious trouble" by driving Egypt and Saudi Arabia straight into Soviet arms, and entangling the Turko-Iraqi Pact in Arab-Israeli problems, thereby negating any possibility of United States support for Northern Tier-based security arrangements.²³⁶ James Moose, American Ambassador in Damascus, also opposed any overt or covert Iraqi manoeuvres, suggesting "positive United States action [such as] social and economic development" represented a far better option.²³⁷ Nuri's disappointment at this attempt to restrain Iraq became immediately apparent.²³⁸ Although Macmillan's position on Iraqi attempts for aggrandisement at Syrian expense entailed considerably more ambiguity than that of Nuri, he considered recent American

²³⁴ R.M. Hadow Memorandum, 24 September 1955, PRO FO 371/115522 V1073/1089; COS (55) 83rd Meeting, 11 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115522 V1073/1099.

²³⁵ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 3 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 323; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 4 October 1955; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and R. Makins, 6 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 304; UK Embassy Tehran to FO, 7 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115522 V1073/1077; Gallman, p. 161; Rathmell, pp. 107-8; Lesch, *Syria*, p. 72. British documents suggest that United States official George Allen had mixed feelings regarding Iraqi attempts to annex Syria, although American records seem to indicate that Allen and Dulles held similarly negative views on this issue, at least in early and mid-October. See UK Embassy Washington to FO, 11 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/10 and Memcon: G. Allen, F. Wilkins, R. Makins, 10 October 1955, JFD:DOS Box 44. British documents suggest that other State Department disparities—on such issues as American affiliation with the Turko-Iraqi Pact—existed at this time as well; see R.M. Hadow to FO, 18 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115525 V1073/1157.

²³⁶ J.F. Dulles to G. Allen, 6 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 305; 260th NSC Meeting, 6 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 66; DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 7 October 1955. Ashton, *Problem*, p. 56 contends that in October 1955, Dulles moved toward support for Iraqi ambitions vis-à-vis Syria. While in a general sense this may be true (see note 254), on balance his stance remained one of opposition, rather than support, regarding 'Fertile Crescent' projects, particularly those involving force.

²³⁷ US Embassy Damascus to DOS, 14 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XV* no. 312; Parker, p. 103. By late October, Moose's position had shifted somewhat. He suggested that Iraqi plans for "straightening out the Syrian situation may [now] be worthy of our attention." (DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 25 October 1955)

²³⁸ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 13 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 311; DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 19 October 1955.

argumentation regarding Iran and its role in security arrangements unpersuasive and inconsistent.²³⁹ After all, Washington had for months pressed to bring Tehran into the Pact. The Foreign Office therefore successfully concluded its bid for Iranian accession to the Pact.²⁴⁰

Thus, by mid-October, Dulles' plan for minimising the negative implications of Soviet-Egyptian deal-making lay in shambles. Not only had he failed in his quest for a temporary lull in Middle Eastern collective security initiatives, but Moscow now offered a new round of arms to Arab nations,²⁴¹ Iraq stood poised to devour Syria, Israel indicated strong interest in toppling Nasser through military force,²⁴² and ESS formalisation—which not long before seemed nothing more than a fanciful Arab dream—appeared imminent. Dulles consoled himself by noting his opposition to British sponsorship of Iranian accession meant the United States “could not be blamed for its consequences.”²⁴³

This must have provided cold comfort, particularly when American efforts to forestall a new Israeli ‘pre-emptive’ emphasis met obvious failure.²⁴⁴ Israeli forces launched major attacks against Egyptian positions at Kuntilla and el-Sabha in late October and early November, leading to scores of Arab deaths.²⁴⁵ As Bar-On suggests, ‘activists’ in Tel Aviv, particularly David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Dayan, probed Egyptian positions to “irk Egypt...into attacking Israel...[to] egg Nasser on into

²³⁹ H. Macmillan to R. Makins, 5 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115522 V1073/1089; A. Eden to H. Macmillan, 12 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115523 V1073/1110; *Descent*, 30 October 1955, p. 294. US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 11 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 308 tries, with limited success, to interpret Macmillan’s position on recent Iraqi ‘Fertile Crescent’ ambitions. Apparently the Foreign Secretary wanted Nuri to adopt a “more forward [Syrian] policy” by “using [Iraqi] wealth more effectively,” while avoiding outright aggression.

²⁴⁰ *Economist*, 15 October 1955, p. 197; Macmillan, pp. 638-39; Lesch, *Syria*, pp. 81-82.

²⁴¹ GAOH.

²⁴² DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 17 October 1955; US Embassy Tel Aviv to DOS, 12 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 403.

²⁴³ 261st NSC Meeting, 13 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 68.

²⁴⁴ J.F. Dulles to DOS, 10 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 395.

defending his newly won prestige and leadership,” thus giving Israel a perfect opportunity to destroy Nasser before Egypt absorbed ‘Czech’ arms.²⁴⁶ To make matters worse, Dulles had recently learned of Moscow’s latest military and economic offers to Saudi Arabia.²⁴⁷ As had been the case with the ‘Czech’ arms transaction, Soviet terms were extremely favourable for the potential recipient. Dulles therefore assessed as relatively high the odds of Saudi acceptance.²⁴⁸ Having exhausted reasonable ideas to keep Riyadh from following Cairo’s lead—for instance, he rejected abandonment of long-standing American impartiality in Eastern Arabian boundary disputes—Dulles hoped King Saud would carefully weigh the benefits of association with the West against the costs of a Soviet presence in his kingdom, and conclude that, despite recurring problems which had befooled Saudi-Western relations, Free World orientation represented Saudi Arabia’s best long-term option.²⁴⁹

At this singularly inopportune juncture, Britain executed Operation *Bonaparte*, attacking Saudi forces in Buraimi without prior American consultation, or even notification.²⁵⁰ After formal ESS political and military arrangements materialised on October 20th, 27th, and November 6th, Macmillan became active on another Middle Eastern front as well.²⁵¹ His scruples over ‘Fertile Crescent’ schemes ebbed noticeably,

²⁴⁵ US Consulate Jerusalem to DOS, 28 October 1955, JFD:DOS Box 136; *Times*, 4 November 1955, p. 8; Oren, “Escalation.”

²⁴⁶ Bar-On, pp. 43, 49; B. Morris, pp. 292-94.

²⁴⁷ *NYT*, 8 October 1955, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 13 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115522 V1073/1090. DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 18 October 1955, is also significant.

²⁴⁹ J.F. Dulles Memorandum, 17 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 69. Despite many interpretations to the contrary, such as Petersen—who attributes to the United States and Saudi Arabia a “mutual desire to best Britain”—this document shows that Dulles retained American neutrality regarding Anglo-Saudi disputes until late 1955.

²⁵⁰ See Chapter Four.

²⁵¹ *Economist*, 29 October 1955, p. 365; *Times*, 7 November 1955, p. 6. *MEJ*, Volume X no. 2 (1955) p. 77 has full text of the Syrian-Egyptian and Saudi-Egyptian alliance instruments of October 20th and 27th, respectively.

and Britain seemed on the brink of unleashing Nuri against Syria.²⁵² On balance, Dulles opposed this new outburst of British assertiveness. He concluded Eden's Cabinet acted recklessly in moving against Saudi Arabia *precisely at the moment* when Riyadh considered attractive Soviet offers. American diplomats in Jeddah, noting "extreme Saudi bitterness," concurred with this sentiment.²⁵³

Central Intelligence estimates predicted British military operations would increase Moscow's appeal to Saud, while fatally compromising Anglo-Saudi relations, with inestimable consequences for Western positions throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Nasser's hints that he might supply Riyadh with (Soviet) weaponry from his own arsenal only exacerbated an already-delicate situation. Therefore, in their conversations with Saudi representatives, American officials deprecated Britain's "precipitate move" and, at a more fundamental level, Washington shifted away from the neutrality which had for five years marked American policy regarding Anglo-Saudi territorial disputes. Although the State Department now prepared for an unambiguous shift toward the Turko-Iraqi Pact if American regional moderation failed, and ESS states defected *en masse* from the West, Dulles still held a shred of hope he could avoid this nightmarish outcome. The State Department therefore maintained its negative stance regarding Nuri's Syrian ambitions, informing British authorities that Washington "find[s] it difficult to adopt a benevolent attitude toward an Iraqi attack on Syria." Dulles also fended off yet another of Macmillan's requests for American accession and aid to the Turko-Iraqi Pact, while

²⁵² J.F. Dulles to DOS, 3 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 384 illustrates a lack of Foreign Office consensus on this issue. In contrast to Macmillan's apparent enthusiasm for Iraqi action in Syria, Kirkpatrick noted "substantial objections" to this course. FO to UK Embassy Baghdad, 3 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1219 contains additional information; E.M. Rose of the Foreign Office suggested that Nuri tighten Syrian-Iraqi ties, perhaps through Syrian Pact accession. See also Saunders, pp. 45-46, who concludes that in late October, London held generally positive views regarding direct Iraqi action in Syria.

²⁵³ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 31 October 1955; UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 3 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114626 EA1081/430.

espousing ‘public neutrality’ regarding ESS arrangements.²⁵⁴ Similarly, when Israeli leaders attempted to travel to the United States, Dulles unsuccessfully strove to head off their visit. Since Israeli diplomats had recently requested direct American military support,²⁵⁵ he correctly anticipated a repetition of this pressure if Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett visited Washington.²⁵⁶

Because Dulles feared additional Soviet penetration posed “immense jeopardy...to Western Europe[an] oil supplies,” while undermining containment, his basic objective had not changed—by avoiding inflammatory policies, he sought to reduce regional volatility, and thus quarantine Communist subversion, in hopes that Soviet leaders would shift pressure away from the Middle East to less important and less vulnerable points.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 24 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115525 V1073/1162; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/14 & *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 358; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/15; A. Dulles to J.F. Dulles, 26 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 184; 263rd NSC Meeting, 27 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 361; US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 28 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 185; US Consulate Dhahran to DOS, 30 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 186; FO Memorandum, 1 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1220; UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 2 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/20; US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 2 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 379; UK Embassy Islamabad to FO, 3 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1230A; H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 5 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 387; *Descent*, 8 November 1955, p. 298. In H. Macmillan to FO, 28 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/16G Macmillan curiously concludes that Dulles “mov[es] in the direction of being less averse to, if not wholly favouring, an Iraqi coup” in Syria. Perhaps Macmillan’s appraisal sprang from Dulles’ sentiment that “the lesser evil was permitting Iraq to act in Syria if it could do so without open armed aggression.” (DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 27 October 1955) One day later, however, Dulles instructed Hoover to inquire about Iraqi intentions in Syria “without implying any concurrence on our part.” (*FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 368) Saunders, pp. 46-47 concludes that Dulles oscillated between opposition and ambiguity regarding an Iraqi annexation of Syria; on balance I agree.

²⁵⁵ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 31 October 1955; AEOH; *Times*, 5 & 11 November 1955, pp. 6 & 7; B. Morris, p. 297; Takeyh, “Pan-Arabism” pp. 250-52.

²⁵⁶ J.F. Dulles to DOS, 8 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 389; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and R. Makins, 20 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 420; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and M. Sharett, 6 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 437; Levey. Memcon: D. Eisenhower and H. Hoover, 9 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 393 and 267th NSC Meeting, 21 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 81 indicate that United States interest in an Arab-Israeli breakthrough—which had been strong for months—accelerated in late 1955, thus accounting in part for Dulles’ unsuccessful attempt to hold Israeli leaders at arm’s length.

²⁵⁷ Memcon: J.F. Dulles, R. Nixon, C. Wilson, H. Hoover, G. Humphrey, 18 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 343; 262nd NSC Meeting, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 345; H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 14 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 407; Heikal, p. 82.

Dulles Refines American Strategy to Accommodate New Soviet Challenges

Far from diminishing regional efforts, however, the Kremlin escalated its politico-economic offensive as 1955 ended; Eisenhower indicated that perhaps a wholesale review of American foreign policy was in order, since Moscow had significantly shifted its tactics in ways necessitating a shrewd American response.²⁵⁸ In early November, the White House developed its most comprehensive assessments to date of “radical alterations” in Soviet tactics in the Middle East. These analyses, National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 100-7-55: “World Situation and Trends” and National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 30-4-55: “Outlook for United States Interests in the Middle East” discussed the strategic implications of Soviet assistance to “highly vulnerable” Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, noting that collisions between ubiquitous nationalism and provocative Western policies left these countries “dangerously susceptible” to Communist exploitation. Just as Dulles had highlighted Anglo-American diplomatic moderation and subtlety as the best path for regaining lost ground after Nasser’s East Bloc arms deal, NIE 30-4-55 similarly concluded a middle course probably represented Washington’s best available option: to thwart additional Soviet gains, the United States should provide moderate American support for the Turko-Iraqi Pact, should discourage pre-emptive Israeli manoeuvres against Egypt, should discourage Iraqi ambitions on Syria, and should give priority to mending intra-Arab and Arab-Israeli rivalries. In light of Western contradictions, imbalances, and discontinuities, however, even such conservative policies carried no guarantee of success, the estimates warned.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ 269th NSC Meeting, 8 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 X* no. 13; Lesch, *Syria*, p. 83; Eisenhower, p. 25.

²⁵⁹ NIE 100-7-55, 1 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 39; NIE 30-4-55, 8 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 78. Along similar lines, 266th NSC Meeting, 15 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 X* no. 8 discusses Moscow’s “coordinated and high-level operations” to penetrate the Middle East, while NIE 36-1-

Events seemed to confirm these glum conclusions. On November 18th, after Soviet envoys expanded their offers to Saudi Arabia as a direct result of *Bonaparte*,²⁶⁰ numerous press reports indicated consummation of wide-ranging Saudi-Soviet arrangements, including Soviet military assistance, establishment of diplomatic relations between these two countries, and plans for Saudi representatives to visit Prague.²⁶¹ Several days later, Riyadh officially denied any such deal,²⁶² but in early December two Saudi princes visited Czechoslovakia, and discussed various arrangements for securing Soviet bloc weaponry and assistance. Some weeks later, a trade delegation with members from Poland and China traveled to Saudi Arabia to negotiate various economic initiatives.²⁶³ An internal debate clearly gripped the Saudi government: was the combination of Anglo-Hashemite opportunism and apparent United States support for Israel and Britain significant enough to compel Saudi Arabia to cast its lot elsewhere?²⁶⁴

That Saudi leaders even argued this issue was bad enough, but American fortunes continued to slip in late 1955, when the Soviet Union appeared to attain major breakthroughs in its year-old quest to attain intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capability before the United States, a development posing “extremely grave threats to United States security.” On November 6th, a Soviet nuclear detonation—the ‘Joe XVIII shot’ in American parlance—yielded an estimated airburst of 215 kilotons. Some National Security Council members thought this represented a successful guided missile

55: “Outlook for Egyptian Stability and Foreign Policy”, 15 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 411 stresses the value of American moderation in Middle Eastern affairs.

²⁶⁰ *Times*, 15 November 1955, p. 6.

²⁶¹ *NYT*, 18 & 19 November 1955, pp. 10 & 8; *Times*, 16 & 19 November 1955, pp. 10, 6; C.M. Pirie-Gordon Minute, 18 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/20.

²⁶² *Times*, 21 November 1955, p. 7

²⁶³ Safran, p. 79.

²⁶⁴ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 30 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 193. Lackner, p. 112 holds that Riyadh never seriously intended to establish relations with Moscow, but cites no evidence.

test.²⁶⁵ Although the United States government later learned ‘Joe XVIII’ signified much less than American officials initially feared, certain trends were clear. Recent intelligence estimates predicting Moscow would at the earliest gain long-range surface-to-surface missiles by the following decade, and the persistence of American nuclear superiority at least through the end of 1957, now seemed totally dated.²⁶⁶ Revised assessments concluded the Soviet Union had established a significant lead in this field, and would probably deploy some sort of ICBM capability within a few years—well before the United States—a prospect that filled Vice President Richard Nixon with “dread.”²⁶⁷

Eisenhower was similarly attuned to the perils of adverse shifts in the Cold War strategic balance; in mid-summer 1955 he directed the Technical Capabilities Panel, a group of leading American experts from academic, industrial, and defence communities under James Killian’s supervision, evaluate Soviet progress on guided missile technology. As a result of this panel’s conclusions and other intelligence, Eisenhower directed the Defense Department initiate and “prosecute with maximum urgency” an all-out program to develop ICBM weaponry to counter Soviet breakthroughs; the United States also constructed a ‘line of sight’ radar facility in Turkey to observe Russian missile testing at Kapustin Yar.²⁶⁸ Shortly thereafter, the President suffered heart difficulties; at the conclusion of his two-month convalescence, American strategic nuclear technology

²⁶⁵ 266th NSC Meeting, 15 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 40; 271st NSC Meeting, 22 December 1955, DDE:NSC Box 7. Bluth, p. 183 notes that Moscow embarked on its ICBM program in mid-1954; see also Freedman, p. 67.

²⁶⁶ NSC Report: “Basic National Security Policy”, 7 January 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 6 shows American estimates in transition, noting the “grave peril of the Soviet nuclear challenge.” Prior assessments, such as NIEs 11-4-54 and 11-6-54, 14 September & 5 October 1954, predicted that full-scale Soviet ICBM capability probably remained unattainable until the early 1960s. Bowie, *Peace*, p. 167, notes that mid-1954’s Project *Control* predicted complete American nuclear superiority through 1957. Earlier United States intelligence studies estimated non-existent Soviet ICBM capability until the mid-1970s (Freedman, p. 68).

²⁶⁷ DOD Memorandum: “Achieving and Maintaining US and Free World Technological Superiority over the USSR”, 20 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 48.

²⁶⁸ DOD Memorandum: “Intercontinental and Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles,” 30 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 44; Eisenhower, *Mandate*, p. 456; Freedman, p. 69. Roman, p. 25 describes the Technical Capabilities Panel.

seemed to have fallen even further behind surging Soviet strength in this area. This deterioration caused Eisenhower intense consternation.²⁶⁹ He warned members of the National Security Council he would “tolerate no fooling” on such an important topic, while exhorting Defense Department officials to “put every effort” into ICBM research and development since the United States “simply had to achieve such missiles as promptly as possible.”²⁷⁰

While Eisenhower focused on counterbalancing what he perceived to be potential Soviet nuclear supremacy, Dulles pursued a slightly different emphasis. The Secretary, accepting Soviet mastery of ballistics technology in advance of the United States, worked to minimise “profound and overriding political and psychological” effects stemming from these developments.²⁷¹ His perspective reflects an important aspect of foreign policy within the White House. Peter Roman suggests a Soviet strategic missile breakthrough posed three potential challenges for American leaders: it would weaken nuclear deterrence, raise doubts about the utility of an ‘extended deterrence’ policy in Western Europe, and necessitate changes in United States behaviour during a nuclear crisis.²⁷² When considering trends in 1955 and 1956, this assessment is accurate though incomplete. American planners perceived recent Soviet ICBM initiatives as another manifestation of its ongoing political and economic offensive among ‘underdeveloped’ nations.²⁷³ By attaining superiority in nuclear technology—the quintessence of modern industrial and technological prowess—Moscow strengthened its position in the ongoing

²⁶⁹ AGI; AGOH.

²⁷⁰ Soviet progress in ICBM development soon appeared in the popular press. See, for instance, *Economist*, 17 December 1955, p. 1035.

²⁷¹ 268th NSC Meeting, 1 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 45. Dulles’ expectation of Soviet success may also explain why he began shifting toward a more flexible nuclear doctrine in late 1955, apparent in his December 8th address to the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association (*FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 47).

²⁷² Roman, p. 26.

²⁷³ DOS Memorandum: “US and Soviet Missiles”, 30 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 43, which also validates Roman’s assessment that American leaders thought Soviet ICBM success might damage ‘extended deterrence.’

East-West contest for global loyalties. Rapid Communist industrialisation had already yielded benefits by giving an impression that societies who followed the Soviet lead could achieve similar success; favourable ICBM developments amplified this appeal.²⁷⁴

As 1955 ended, nearly all indicators demonstrated that new Soviet tactics for increasing its influence vis-à-vis that of the United States had scored major Middle Eastern victories, and additional success loomed, in light of dangerous Anglo-Saudi tension, Communist technological progress, Arab-Israeli hostility, and other factors. Eisenhower and his subordinates faced an obvious challenge: to maintain containment as a viable strategy and protect key resources, they needed to minimise the scope and magnitude of these breakthroughs.

Their response, which coalesced in 1956, merely elaborated policies Dulles had established some months before. Above all, Washington sought to retain maximum flexibility in dealing with this highly fluid situation.²⁷⁵ Moscow prosecuted a war of political manoeuvre, so committing to static positions entailed significant risk of ultimate defeat. To the immense frustration of British leaders, who renewed their bid to secure open American affiliation with the Baghdad Pact (subsequent to a late November 1955 Baghdad summit, this term became the official name for regional security arrangements linking Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Britain), Dulles' fixation on flexibility meant he opposed robust and dynamic measures to make this alliance a centerpiece of Arab political life.²⁷⁶ Nor would United States officials make public declarations of an Anglo-American 'united front' for Middle Eastern policy, as British leaders had earnestly

²⁷⁴ 267th NSC Meeting, 21 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 X* no. 9; 273rd NSC Meeting, 18 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 X* no. 14. Memcon: D. Eisenhower, C. Wilson, and A. Radford, 19 December 1956, DDED Box 20 is also significant. Additionally, Kaufman, "Response" describes infatuation amongst 'underdeveloped' nations regarding rapid Soviet technological and industrial gains.

²⁷⁵ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and S. Lloyd, 1 February 1956, PRO FO 371/121271 V1075/60.

²⁷⁶ H. Macmillan to A. Eden, 25 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 PM/55/172; H. Macmillan to J.F. Dulles, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 83.

sought.²⁷⁷ Instead, Washington intensified its campaign to appear wholly impartial regarding regional rivalries, not only to avoid becoming entangled in awkward arrangements Moscow could easily exploit, but to provide immediate impetus for an Arab-Israeli settlement as well.²⁷⁸ This, in turn, meant Egyptian and Saudi aspirations for regional stature would, from an American perspective, enjoy equal standing with those of Iraq.²⁷⁹ By now, Anglo-American regional strategies followed almost entirely divergent paths, setting the stage for the alliance discontinuities of 1956.

²⁷⁷ D. MacArthur II to J.F. Dulles, 9 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XXVII* no. 221.

²⁷⁸ H. Hoover to US Embassy Jeddah, 2 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 194.

²⁷⁹ DOS Memorandum, 13 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 87; J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Jeddah, 13 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 198.

Chapter Three **“Running Ahead of Arab Opinion”: Britain and Jordan, 1955**

Hussein ibn Talal, who became King of Jordan in August 1952, was the great-grandson of Sharif Hussein of Hijaz, leader of the ‘Arab Revolt’ against Ottoman control during World War One. Following that war, Britain supported Abdullah, Sharif Hussein’s son, in his quest to rule the British mandatory state of Transjordan. Abdullah became King of Jordan in May 1946, when Jordan gained full independence, and served in that capacity until his assassination in Summer 1951. His son, Talal, succeeded Abdullah, ruling as King for a little over one year before abdicating. Talal’s son, Hussein, assumed the throne in August 1952, becoming King of Jordan at age 17.¹

Jordan’s Place in British Regional Strategy

Jordan played crucial geographic, strategic and political roles in Britain’s Hashemite-Gulf Arch. Its central position within the Arab world drove a wedge into any Egyptian-Saudi-Syrian collaborative efforts. These three countries represented major regional bastions of anti-British sentiment, and harboured virulent nationalism. Therefore, to complicate their plans for cooperation was definitely in London’s interest. So long as Anglo-Jordanian connections persisted, overland lines of communication between any combination of these three states remained rather tenuous and vulnerable.

Britain also relied on Jordanian bases and troops. These assets provided invaluable access, influence, and deployable power.² Persian Gulf crises in the early 1950s demonstrated how London could parlay Jordanian capabilities into strength at other important points—Arab Legionnaires constituted a core around which the Trucial

¹ Yorke, pp. 3-4.

² Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and G. Allen, 13 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 91. As Shuckburgh pointed out, Britain “has troops in Jordan not because [it] derives psychological benefits, but because [these troops] contribute to the security of [Middle Eastern] oil.”

Oman Levies coalesced, providing leadership and other skills during the formative years of these Eastern Arabian units.

Finally, Jordan's Hashemite tradition made Amman a natural ally for Iraq in the rough-and-tumble world of Arab politics. Old Gang domestic unpopularity made political isolation dangerous. If Arab unanimity developed on an issue or range of issues, and Baghdad moved contrarily, Iraqi public opinion might very well demand accommodation of these broader trends. However, such alienation could never occur so long as Hashemites linked to Britain retained power in Jordan. Iraq would always have at least one ally, and therefore avoid complete isolation.³ As the 1950s progressed, Iraqi policies on some issues diverged further and further from mainstream Arab sentiments, so Jordanian support became essential.

An Ambiguous Anglo-American Moratorium Bridges Strategic Differences,

Spring-Summer 1955

In light of Jordan's multi-faceted importance for preservation of British regional prerogatives, Foreign Office anxiety was hardly surprising when, in March 1955, Dulles clarified his stance on the Turko-Iraqi Pact and its immediate future. His blueprint clashed headlong with British expectations, which envisioned steady Pact growth. Washington now indicated such a course would not receive its blessing.⁴

Dulles had reasons for this conservative approach, although these did not win much sympathy from British officials. The State Department perceived arrangements between Ankara and Baghdad as potentially destabilising if other Arab countries followed suit, or if these ties threatened Syrian independence. Since Dulles sought cooperation with Egypt and Saudi Arabia on a host of key issues, policies estranging

³ FO Memorandum, 14 January 1956, PRO FO 371/121492 VJ1051/41; COS Memorandum, 3 July 1956, BDEEP:CG&EE I no. 51.

these important states or accentuating intra-Arab divisions, such as Western pressure on Arab states to commit to regional security coalitions, now became antithetical to his strategic design.⁵ His decision to adopt a ‘northern focus’ for regional defence arrangements sprang from this basic fact, so when he learned of Anglo-Iraqi-Turkish interest in broader Arab membership, he commented London “had grabbed the ball...and [was] running away with it in a direction which would have...unfortunate consequences.”⁶ Dulles’ negative conclusion on British policy coincided with his plan to exclude indefinitely from Pact membership the states of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, or, at the very least, refrain from active attempts to recruit from this group. The State Department soon signaled to Cairo and Riyadh its interest in “preserv[ing] [the] status quo...regarding additional Arab adherence.”⁷

Assistant Secretary of State in the Foreign Office Evelyn Shuckburgh’s response exemplified British perspectives on Dulles’ re-orientation. He envisioned that, following British accession, Pakistan, Iran, and probably Jordan would be the next states to join.⁸ Therefore, he remarked that “advis[ing] Jordan or any other Arab state” against Pact membership would be “extremely unwise.”⁹ Eden informed American Assistant Secretary of State George Allen that he concurred with Shuckburgh’s assessment, “strongly urg[ing] Washington] not weaken in [its] support for the Pact.”¹⁰ Eden, of course, understood the connection between Britain’s Middle Eastern position and this Pact. Since Anglo-Iraqi ties—and an important part of the Hashemite-Gulf Arch—would

⁴ Persson, pp. 218-19 discusses Anglo-American tension over Middle Eastern mutual security and Jordan in Spring 1955.

⁵ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 16 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 IX* no. 24 illustrates scattered American dissent from Dulles’ idea for limiting Pact membership.

⁶ Memcon: J.F. Dulles, G. Allen, H. Hoover, 24 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 55.

⁷ DOS to US Embassy Cairo, 30 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 30; Freiberger, p. 116.

⁸ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, 30 March 1955, *BDEEP:CG&EE I* no. 78. DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 11 March 1955 is also valuable.

⁹ US Embassy London to DOS, 1 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 61.

¹⁰ G. Allen to J.F. Dulles, 1 April 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 4; DOS:TSDSS Box 88, 5 April 1955.

shortly rest on a foundation of regional security, any limits on Pact freedom of action carried undesirable implications for long-term viability.

After a long and contentious debate, British and American officials reached a *modus vivendi* over additional Arab membership. They agreed to avoid immediate pressure on Jordan, and let matters ride until events warranted a change in course.¹¹ Both sides won limited victories. Dulles secured his moratorium, but London left a door open for future Pact augmentation, particularly since Jordan might always join of its own volition—an action beyond the moratorium's purview. Since British leaders had no *immediate* interest in securing Jordanian accession, their decision to 'play long' in accordance with American preferences represented a small concession when weighed against the benefit of unencumbered possibilities for future Pact growth. The Anglo-American moratorium provided another tactical benefit for London in that the Foreign Office bought time for defusing or outflanking the growth of Egyptian hostility by assuring Nasser that Britain "would not press other Arab states to join the Pact."¹²

The characteristic that made this Anglo-American bargain acceptable to both the State Department and the Foreign Office—its ambiguity—also represented its primary liability, as became evident later that year. Since neither Washington nor London outlined which mutually acceptable circumstances rendered this arrangement obsolete, neither had exact information on what the other had in mind. In essence, their moratorium deferred inevitable Anglo-American disagreements regarding the Pact's future.

Initially, this postponement served British and American purposes. A lack of provocative Anglo-American initiatives gave Washington an opportunity to begin mending various rivalries, while halting political deterioration which had undermined

¹¹ US Embassy London to DOS, 2 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 4, Memcon: J.F. Dulles and R. Makins, 7 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 70, and DOS:TSDDS Box 88, 7 April 1955 outline this agreement. See also US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 8 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 34.

regional stability. The Foreign Office left Jordan to its own neutralist devices, secure in the knowledge that official Jordanian pronouncements to that end would embody ‘non-alignment’ in name only—Amman’s true posture would, as always, tilt toward the West in general and, more specifically, toward Britain.

Soon, however, British officials contemplated breaking the moratorium, and embarking upon southern Pact expansion. In late May, Charles Duke, British Ambassador in Amman, queried Shuckburgh about the prospects and desirability of Jordanian affiliation. He thought overtures to King Hussein might set into motion a chain of events culminating in Jordan’s Pact membership. Although Jordanian officials had recently stated their desire to “keep quiet, say nothing...[and] stay out of trouble,” Prime Minister Tawfiq Abu al-Huda’s resignation altered political balances in Jordan. Al-Huda made no secret of his opposition to Pact membership; his departure facilitated potential Jordanian adherence. Duke avoided definite recommendations at this point, preferring caution to any dramatic shift in British policy.¹³

Duke apparently remained sufficiently confident in the strength of Britain’s position in Jordan vis-à-vis any possible competitors for influence to perceive accession as unnecessary at that particular time.¹⁴ Since Pakistani accession appeared imminent, Pact momentum faced no short-run crisis. For his part, Shuckburgh exhibited indecision and vacillation, noting Jordan “continues to sit on the fence.” Most likely, he concluded the benefits of quiet Jordanian ‘neutrality’ still avoided risks of directly challenging Egypt, thus impelling him to a non-committal, cautious stance. Before Duke had any serious conversations with King Hussein on Pact issues, Shuckburgh thought, Eden’s

¹² UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 18 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115653 VJ1051/36.

¹³ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 25 May 1955, PRO FO 371/115512 V1073/848; Podeh, *Quest*, p. 174; Faddah, p. 248; Dann, *Radicalism*, p. 25; Little, “Puppet.”

¹⁴ In UK Embassy Amman to FO, 29 June 1955, PRO FO 371/115650 VJ10345/1 Duke assesses British positions in Jordan.

Cabinet needed to establish whether *immediate* Jordanian membership served vital British interests. Shuckburgh also noted White House objections to Jordanian membership—commensurate with the Anglo-American moratorium—as a serious obstacle to any British initiatives in Amman.¹⁵

Shuckburgh had good reason for concern about American opposition. As spring yielded to summer, not only did United States diplomats offer gloomy predictions regarding the odds of Jordanian accession, but State Department campaigns for maintaining a ‘northern focus’ regarding regional security arrangements also failed to abate.¹⁶ Dulles, in fact, assured Egyptian representatives that Washington would refrain from recruiting Arab members, confiding additional Arab membership would “embarrass” him. American officials similarly reassured Syrian diplomats. Unease about Western motives and plans grew in Cairo and Damascus, so Dulles tried to assuage their apprehension by reinforcing his belief in a Pact moratorium.¹⁷

When problems with Pakistani accession emerged in late June, thus threatening Pact momentum, another half-hearted British consideration of Jordanian adherence commenced.¹⁸ Just as before, however, a combination of adverse factors meant yet another stillborn initiative. Perhaps foremost were sentiments in Amman. Duke reported Jordanian leaders still exhibited strongly negative feelings regarding Pact affiliation.¹⁹

¹⁵ FO Minute, 10 June 1955, PRO FO 371/115512 V1073/848.

¹⁶ US Embassy Amman to DOS, 14 June 1955, USNA RG 59, 785.00/6-1455. UK Embassy Ankara to FO, 8 June 1955, PRO FO 371/115512 V1073/850 and UK Embassy Washington to FO, 15 June 1955, PRO FO 371/115514 V1073/886 show Shuckburgh’s awareness of American opposition to Jordanian membership.

¹⁷ Memcon: M. Fawzi and J.F. Dulles, 24 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 138; DOS to US Embassy Damascus, 30 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 298. Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and F. Russell, 2 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 110 illustrates that at that time only Russell—who headed American *Alpha* efforts—openly dissented from Dulles’ ‘northern focus.’ Russell thought Jordanian and Lebanese Pact entry might increase their participation in an Arab-Israeli peace process. Therefore he favoured their accession. Dulles, by contrast, assumed that southern expansion might *increase* Jordanian participation, but also tended to *decrease* Egyptian cooperation.

¹⁸ R.M. Hadow Memorandum, 16 June 1955; I. Kirkpatrick to UK Embassy Washington, 18 June 1955, PRO FO 371/115513 V1073/869.

¹⁹ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 19 July 1955, PRO FO 371/115516 V1073/947. See also Little, “Puppet.”

Although Shuckburgh suggested various measures to keep the “Pact [from] going to sleep,” he also warned “running ahead of Arab opinion would be fatal.”²⁰

Additionally, an unsettled situation within Jordan in early summer marked an inauspicious moment for any major initiatives. In response to widespread perceptions among Jordanians that “palpable rigging” had facilitated the current government’s entrée, and to give under-represented and fractious Jordanian elements a voice—thereby perhaps easing Amman’s chronic political turmoil—King Hussein pondered dissolving Parliament and sanctioning new elections. To do so would, of course, entail a period of instability. For this and other reasons, Duke urged Hussein not to prorogue Parliament, despite Duke’s knowledge that electoral improprieties played a significant role in the current government’s accession. He feared fresh elections would allow “extremist [Jordanian] elements certainly to increase their representation,” thus dealing a body-blow not only to British ambitions for Jordan’s eventual Pact membership, but to broader Anglo-Jordanian ties as well. After reflection, Hussein followed this advice, refraining from Parliamentary dissolution; British officials exalted.²¹ When elections did take place later that year, British officials in Jordan exerted every effort to tilt their outcome in favour of elements advocating continuing close connections with Britain.²²

In addition to Jordan’s domestic situation, external factors also dissuaded London from pressing ahead. The Foreign Office noted “American anxieties” persisted. Although some future action might be necessary to maintain Pact momentum, at this point American support formed a basic precondition for Jordanian adherence, not only regarding Jordan’s membership *per se*—at that time a dim prospect at best—but also for British perspectives on regional security in general. In fact, Shuckburgh thought this

²⁰ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, 20 June 1955, *BDEEP:CG&EE I* no. 81.

²¹ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 5 July 1955, PRO FO 371/115638 VJ1015/15; D.M. Summerhayes Minute, 22 July 1955, PRO FO 371/115638 VJ1015/18; Pappe, “Rule,” p. 213.

latter objective was a fundamental prerequisite for achieving the former.²³ Dulles was merely one of several senior State Department officials who still entertained serious doubts about shifting away from the ‘northern focus’ Washington had outlined earlier that spring.²⁴

By early August, London showed renewed, though cautious, interest in immediate Jordanian membership. The reasons for which British officials resurrected this initiative after a lengthy hiatus are not entirely clear, but probably resulted at least in part as a reaction to Dulles’ recent scheme to kick-start Arab-Israeli peace talks by publicly affirming his commitment to that process. Since Eden and Macmillan feared open Western declarations of this sort might weaken the Iraqi government, Jordanian affiliation could help support Hashemite power in Baghdad.²⁵ In any event, when American officials learned of British plans, they quickly reaffirmed their disapproval, consistent with the existing Anglo-American freeze on Arab membership. First, they thought British assessments of the threat to Nuri were somewhat exaggerated. Also, recent State Department reports confirmed the value of this moratorium for United States policy, noting: “Pact membership should not extend to other Arab states until Arab-Israeli tensions lessen.”²⁶

During mid-August conversations in Washington, Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr. told British Ambassador Roger Makins the White House “believe[s] the disadvantages of Jordanian adherence arising from contiguity to Israel are overriding. We hope the U[nited] K[ingdom] will not encourage Jordan to seek membership until the

²² Satloff, p. 96.

²³ FO Memorandum, 15 June 1955, PRO FO 371/115513 V1073/871.

²⁴ US Embassy Cairo to DOS, 28 June 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 54.

²⁵ US Embassy London to DOS, 12 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 153; Caplan, p. 135.

²⁶ DOS Position Paper: “Middle East Defense,” 11 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 56; DOS to US Embassy Baghdad, 15 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 58.

Arab-Israeli situation has improved.” Makins expressed his agreement with this sentiment, thus indicating to Hoover that Britain intended no demarche.²⁷

Parting Ways: Macmillan’s “Machiavellian Scheme” For Protecting British Interests,

October 1955

Jordanian matters rested at this uneasy equilibrium until Egypt purchased Soviet Bloc weaponry in late September 1955. Nasser’s masterstroke dealt a major blow to Pact prestige, necessitating a British response, as Macmillan pointed out during Anglo-American planning sessions a few days after the Egyptian arms deal came to light. He advocated “reward[ing] the good guys and punishing the bad...we could give Iraq more equipment, and encourage Jordan and Lebanon to join the Pact.”²⁸ He also suggested “strengthening the Northern Pact [*sic*] rapidly.”²⁹ Not long after, Macmillan and Shuckburgh discussed an unidentified “Machiavellian scheme” to solve their Middle Eastern problems.³⁰ Most probably, they “schemed” at Jordanian accession under British encouragement. Some authors, including Scott Lucas, have identified this programme as Macmillan’s decision to sponsor an Iraqi coup in Syria, but some evidence contradicts this interpretation.³¹ Another possibility is that Macmillan and Shuckburgh referred to Foreign Office support for Iranian Pact membership, but this initiative would be difficult to categorise as “Machiavellian,” since Iran was a bona fide Northern Tier state whose long-term participation in regional security arrangements was a foregone conclusion in Western circles.

²⁷ Memcon: H. Hoover and R. Makins, 11 August 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 60.

²⁸ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 26 September 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 310.

²⁹ Hahn, *Egypt*, p. 193. In discussions with CIA officer Chester Cooper, the Chief of British Naval Intelligence proffered a similar approach entailing Pact expansion (Cooper, p. 72).

³⁰ *Descent*, 5 October 1955, p. 288.

³¹ S. Lucas, *Divided*, p. 115 and Dooley, among others, offer this interpretation of the “Machiavellian scheme.” Memcon: J.F. Dulles and R. Makins, 6 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 327, Memcon: G. Allen, F. Wilkins, and R. Makins, 10 October 1955, JFD:DOS Box 44, and Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 26 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 358 contain evidence contradicting this interpretation.

More probable is that Macmillan and Shuckburgh concluded that a good way to strengthen Iraq's position while simultaneously keeping Jordan from drifting toward true neutrality or, even worse, affiliation with Egypt, was to bring Amman into the Turko-Iraqi Pact. As Eden put matters during a Cabinet meeting in early October, "...the importance of [these] developments [in Egypt] lay in their potential effect upon the *other Arab states*."³² Dulles, however, maintained his moratorium support, and thus opposed any Western initiatives in Jordan. In fact, he now had additional reasons for espousing a negative stance on this issue. Because he thought drastic Western responses would merely backfire to Moscow's benefit, his broad plan for containing damage from Egyptian arms deals emphasised forbearance and caution, rather than bold action.

When another round of high-level Anglo-American talks was held in early October, Macmillan took advantage of this opportunity to lobby Dulles again on the merits of setting aside their April moratorium, but this renewed pressure failed to shake the Secretary from his policy of downplaying recent regional developments. All he could elicit from Dulles were promises to "look into this matter," and Dulles leavened this lukewarm response by warning Britain should avoid "any drastic or threatening steps at this time." To ensure Macmillan did not misunderstand, he also reiterated his belief that "patience in handling the current [Middle Eastern] situation" was the wisest Western policy.³³

Despite high-level American reluctance, throughout October British officials examined various plans for pursuing Jordanian accession. London did not irrevocably decide to proceed until late that month, however. British reservations no doubt owed something to Dulles' frequent and open opposition. They probably also stemmed in part from Duke's clear signals that Jordanian leaders showed "no sign of any inclination...to

³² PRO CAB 128 (55) 34th Conclusions, 4 October 1955.

depart from their neutral attitude towards the Pact.” Duke predicted that compelling Jordan into the alliance would require “very heavy pressure, or some extremely striking inducement” from Britain.³⁴

Although Duke doubted Jordan’s accession merited such a potentially large political or economic investment at that particular time, Turkish officials did not. Simultaneous with Macmillan’s increasing interest in securing Jordanian membership was an equivalent upsurge in Turkey’s desire to achieve an identical outcome.³⁵ The extent to which these parallel developments reflected conscious bilateral coordination is not apparent from the evidentiary record, although by mid-October, clearly both Ankara and London had started down a path that culminated in an unsuccessful December 1955 mission to Amman by the Chief of Britain’s Imperial General Staff.³⁶

For Turkish leaders—who were not party to the Anglo-American moratorium—agitating for an expansion of alliance membership to ‘southern’ Arab states was certainly nothing new. They had frequently done so since Turko-Iraqi arrangements coalesced nine months earlier, orchestrating, for example, pressure on Syria to abandon its ties with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and defect to the Turko-Iraqi Pact.³⁷ Indeed, both before and after Nasser’s arms deal, Ankara clearly stood in the vanguard of the movement to recruit Jordan; Aydin contends this stance emanated from Turkish fears regarding encirclement by hostile, pro-Soviet Arab states.³⁸ Turkish leaders suggested to the Foreign Office an opportune “time ha[d] come to press Jordan into the Turko-Iraqi Pact as a stage in the policy of isolating Egypt.” British officials were not quite ready for such an aggressive

³³ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 3 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 323.

³⁴ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 15 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115523 V1073/1115.

³⁵ Podeh, *Quest*, p. 175.

³⁶ UK Embassy Ankara to FO, 14 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115523 V1073/1111 reported that Turkey favoured approaching King Hussein. Duke welcomed Turkish assistance, but assessed “early success” as a remote possibility (PRO FO 371/115523 V1073/1115).

³⁷ Satloff, pp. 111-12; Shmuelovitz, p. 205; Podeh, *Quest*, p. 173.

³⁸ Aydin.

policy, initially doubting the “wisdom of trying to force Jordan into the alliance at present.”³⁹ Although Macmillan “favoured early Pact accession [for] Jordan,” he instructed British Ambassador in Turkey J. Bowker that the “time had not yet come for a deliberate attempt to isolate Egypt.” Bowker was to clarify for Turkish leaders that “attempt[ing] to intimidate [Nasser] by isolating Egypt would likely...throw him into Soviet arms. We should be cautious about trying to extend the Northern Tier southwards as a move against Egypt.” For those reasons, the Foreign Secretary “did not think pressing Jordan at the moment was wise.”⁴⁰

However, Cabinet conclusions from October 20th—the very day of Macmillan’s admonitory dispatch to Ankara—reveal a policy re-evaluation in Eden’s government. Ministers moved toward acceptance of Turkish suggestions for pressing Jordan toward accession. Although Macmillan advocated “adopting a policy of moderation in our dealings with Egypt,” he also wanted to “concentrate on helping the Arab states who behave loyally, while demonstrating...limits to the extent to which we could be provoked.” These irreconcilable positions may have been Macmillan’s subtle request for higher guidance, in light of contradictory pressures on British policy. If so, Eden promptly offered such guidance, laying to rest any ambiguity by noting: “[the] main objective of [British] policy should be to protect our vital Middle Eastern oil interests... strengthening Northern Tier defense arrangements [is] more important than Egyptian attitudes.” In other words, Egyptian opposition to Pact expansion did not carry sufficient import to deter London from pursuing such a course; if a choice between Egypt’s

³⁹ E.M. Rose Memorandum, 17 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115524 V1073/1148; DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 19 October 1955. Rose consulted with Shuckburgh before forwarding his negative appraisal of Turkish suggestions. Shuckburgh agreed, although he did fret about “Jordan going sour on us at this moment.” See *Descent*, 22 October 1955, p. 291.

⁴⁰ FO to UK Embassy Ankara, 20 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115524 V1073/1148. For unknown reasons Macmillan’s comment that he “favoured early Jordanian accession” did not appear in his final draft.

friendship and British access to petroleum became necessary, Eden preferred the latter without hesitation.⁴¹

Eden did not specifically outline how he proposed to augment the Pact, and his reference to “defence arrangements” may have included not only Jordan but Iran as well. His allusion to Egyptian opposition is significant, though. Cairo cared little about events in Iran and did not offer any meaningful resistance to Iranian Pact accession.⁴² Jordan was another story. British officials were all too aware of Nasser’s bitter opposition to Arab expansion of the Pact, so at minimum Eden must have had Jordanian membership in mind during his Cabinet exposition.

Several messages between Bowker and the Foreign Office provide further evidence of a late October British shift to more direct policies in Jordan. Bowker reported a conversation with Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Fatin Rustu Zorlu, in which the latter reiterated Turkey’s zeal for pressing Jordan to accede. Jordanian membership would “be most effective in diminishing” what Nasser had gained by his recent arms transaction, Zorlu thought. His approach on this occasion represented yet another manifestation of long-standing Turkish ambitions for southern Pact expansion. Bowker responded to these proposals by staying within his earlier set of instructions, informing Zorlu of “divergent [Anglo-Turkish] views,” based on Foreign Office “unwilling[ness] to exert pressure on Jordan at a moment when [we think] it would be both unavailing and inopportune.” Bowker’s superiors, however, found Turkish arguments quite persuasive. Kirkpatrick noted “[Zorlu] may well be right. It would be good if Jordan joined now,” although he remained pessimistic regarding the prospects for this outcome. Eden agreed with Zorlu’s sentiment that Jordanian accession was an appealing way to diminish Egyptian prestige. Soon after, when United States officials in Cairo recommended

⁴¹ PRO CAB 128 (55) 36th Conclusions, 20 October 1955.

leaving Pact expansion in abeyance to keep Nasser quiescent, Eden dismissed these suggestions as “foolish.”⁴³

A key, and very possibly paramount, factor pushing Britain from its policy of moderate support for Jordanian accession—which emerged as a consequence of Egyptian arms transactions—to a more zealous posture was a mid-October Cabinet Report outlining Britain’s deteriorating petroleum situation. This apocalyptic assessment warned of a coming collapse in the Hashemite-Gulf Arch if London stood idly by, noting the “serious danger the Middle East will slip away from us.” The report predicted a tripling in annual British oil consumption within twenty years; only Middle Eastern sources could fill those needs. Regional petroleum “[is] essential to the [British] economy...if [oil] were cut off...our economic position would suffer irrevocable harm.” Britain “vitally...need[ed]” Middle Eastern oil, but British regional access was “vulnerable” and could very possibly disappear because of Soviet subversion, Arab-Israeli rivalries, or rising indigenous forces such as nationalism and yearnings for non-alignment. Economic and strategic factors made such deprivation unacceptable; the report recommended, therefore, that Eden’s Cabinet “build up for ourselves a position of greater [Middle Eastern] strength” since Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Russia were “neutralis[ing] our influence, even in Jordan.”⁴⁴ A concerted effort to bring Jordan into the Pact represented one obvious way to “build up positions of greater strength,” as this manoeuvre would solidify Iraqi-Jordanian ties, halt anti-Hashemite penetration by British adversaries, and restore Nuri’s prestige to some extent.

⁴² Trevelyan, p. 56; Monroe, p. 189; Heikal, p. 89.

⁴³ UK Embassy Ankara to FO, 22 October 1955; I. Kirkpatrick Minute, 24 October 1955; A. Eden Minute, 24 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115525 V1073/1152; Lamb, p. 176; Persson, p. 334; Caplan, p. 157.

⁴⁴ Cabinet Report: “Middle East Oil,” 14 October 1955, PRO CAB 129 (55) CP 152. Ministers discussed this report—which provided indirect support not only for British initiatives in Jordan, but in Eastern Arabia as well—at an 18 October 1955 Cabinet Meeting, PRO CAB 128 (55) 35th Conclusions. See also Lamb, p. 173.

Hussein's late October visit to Britain provided Shuckburgh a convenient opportunity to plumb the King's mood discreetly on various domestic, military, and foreign policy issues. These included Jordan's Air Force, and relations between Hussein and high-ranking British officials serving in the Jordanian government. Shuckburgh thought these talks went "quite well," although apparently Amman's participation in Pact arrangements did not figure among the specific topics of conversation, perhaps because Hussein feared openly challenging Nasser.⁴⁵ His conservative stance flew directly against updated British political assessments, however. In Amman, Duke now reported a deteriorating situation, suggesting London take "some definite step to arrest this process." Foreign Office authorities recommended bringing Jordan into the Pact straightaway, since such expansion could help restore Britain's position "without too much trouble or cost to ourselves."⁴⁶

Simultaneous with British re-evaluations of Jordanian policy, the State Department engaged in similar endeavors. James Moose, American Ambassador in Damascus, who assessed that "Communist threats [in Syria are] now substantially greater" than earlier estimates had reflected, thought encouraging Jordan to join the Pact might help halt Syria's "current leftward trend." Since "[the] United States has much at stake in [this country, and] the situation here merits serious consideration now," ongoing Syrian deterioration might justify such seemingly drastic measures as breaking Dulles' long-standing moratorium on Arab membership.⁴⁷ By exhibiting positive attitudes regarding Jordanian accession, Moose may have been attempting to offer Western options in Syria *other than* an Iraqi coup, an alternative possessing considerable mid-October momentum, but one which Moose opposed at that time. American Ambassador

⁴⁵ *Descent*, 24 October 1955, p. 292.

⁴⁶ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 27 October 1955; FO Minute, 3 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115652 VJ1051/22.

to Jordan Lester Mallory also looked favourably upon Jordanian affiliation, while expressing strong opposition to any sort of Western pressure on Jordan. By impelling Jordan to pull away from the West, such tactics could only backfire, he thought, leaving Moscow to fill the resulting vacuum. Mallory thought Jordan's accession would be productive *only* if circumstances were right.⁴⁸ He observed that "charged public opinion and rising Russian strength" made Jordanian cooperation in an Arab-Israeli peace settlement nearly impossible, so a "Pact build-up would be desirable [for] redressing [the] broader situation," subject to the caveats he outlined.⁴⁹

Possibilities for immediate Jordanian accession surfaced once again when Macmillan and Dulles met in Paris in late October, to prepare strategies for an upcoming Geneva Foreign Ministers' Summit. The record becomes murky at this point, as British and American accounts are at odds on several points, and wildly divergent on a few others. Macmillan's recollection of an October 28th conversation with American diplomats maintains Dulles asked "whether we could bring...pressure upon Jordan to join the Pact. He thought it would be a fine thing if [Jordan joined]. Dulles regarded Jordan as our affair." According to Macmillan, Dulles also added Britain "might consider trying to get Jordan to make a unilateral settlement of frontiers [with] Israel...if this could be done, leaving Egypt out altogether, it would be a great advantage."⁵⁰

United States sources show records of several Anglo-American conversations that day, with widely varying content, so establishing exactly which American memorandum might match Macmillan's aforementioned recollection is difficult. According to

⁴⁷ US Embassy Damascus to DOS, 14 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XV* no. 312.

⁴⁸ For instance, Mallory knew that "mass pressure" and "mob action" hindered Hussein's ability to carry through unpopular policies. See US Embassy Amman to DOS, 22 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 5.

⁴⁹ US Embassy Amman to DOS, 1 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 76. PRO FO 371/115652 VJ1051/22 shows Mallory's sense of urgency. Parker, p. 105, discusses policy inputs from Moose and Mallory in October 1955.

Macmillan, during the conversation in which Dulles urged Britain to secure Jordanian Pact entry, the American Secretary of State made no reference to recent British military operations at Buraimi.⁵¹ But the American memorandum noting an Anglo-American discussion of Jordan *does* contain a lengthy reference to Buraimi—Dulles used that particular conversation as a forum to scold Macmillan for the “suddenness of British actions [in Eastern Arabia]...and the absence of any prior information about it.” According to the American account, during that conversation, Macmillan “thought it might be a good idea to try and push Jordan in the direction of its Hashemite cousins, Iraq. It might be that Jordan could be induced to move toward a settlement with Israel if it had Iraqi backing.” According to this memorandum, Dulles did not answer Macmillan directly, introducing instead the subject of Buraimi. The only certainty to emerge from these contradictory and confusing accounts is that British and American officials *did* discuss Jordan. But the issue of who broached the topic in the first place, and who initially suggested Jordan’s Pact membership, remains a mystery.

In light of events before and after this dialogue, I speculate Macmillan’s memorandum was flawed, and the American account reflected greater accuracy—although it, too, probably contained distortions.⁵² Macmillan probably decided to bring up the topic even before these discussions convened. Pre-summit conversations in Paris provided a convenient opportunity to garner American support for Britain’s Jordanian

⁵⁰ H. Macmillan to FO, 28 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/16G. Macmillan’s dispatch is fascinating for many reasons, including its variance from American accounts. Whether Macmillan himself actually drafted this memorandum is unclear.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* Macmillan expressed “surprise and pleasure” that Dulles avoided discussing Buraimi during this conversation.

⁵² My findings regarding who bears responsibility for suggesting a Jordanian initiative, Dulles or Macmillan, generally parallel Ashton, *Problem*, pp. 64-66, who suggests Macmillan probably lied, in light of his obfuscatory tendencies on other occasions, and Takeyh, “Pan-Arabism” p. 260, although he incorrectly dates these Macmillan-Dulles conversations to December 1955. Ovendale, *Transfer*, pp. 131-32, by contrast, contends that Macmillan’s account was more accurate than the American memorandum, thereby placing responsibility with Dulles. Persson, p. 275, is non-committal, except to say Dulles “seemed prepared to accept a policy to influence Jordan to join, or at least not to advise Jordan against entry.”

initiative, particularly since momentum in London for this project continued to build. Eden had given his blessing, so reversing earlier British failures and securing American acquiescence freed the Foreign Office to consolidate plans for Jordan's accession. Other, independent recollections of the events in Paris support an interpretation that Macmillan strongly favoured Jordanian accession, while Dulles was at best lukewarm in that regard. For instance, British records indicate Zorlu and Macmillan "agreed Turkish President [Celal] Bayar, when in Amman, would speak in favor of Jordan's early accession...and the [British] Ambassador would...tell [the] Jordanian government [Britain] fully supported this advice."⁵³

Further substantiation of British support and American opposition emerges upon examination of a conversation between Dulles and Zorlu while the two were in Paris in late October. Zorlu told Dulles he had "discussed the idea [of Jordanian membership] with Macmillan, [who] favoured it." He also requested American support for Turkish representations to Jordanian leaders, in which Turkish emissaries intended to urge Amman's Pact accession. Dulles responded coolly. He reviewed traditional American opposition to southward expansion of the Pact on the grounds that doing so would "antagonize Egypt" and perhaps impart an "anti-Israeli character [to the Pact, while] inhibiting [American] support" for that alliance. Zorlu, who thought "Pact foundations were not yet very deep and members must see that Egypt's policy does not pay," continued to press Dulles, suggesting an American security guarantee to Israel to offset any anti-Israeli taint resulting from Jordanian accession. The Secretary of State, uninterested in such a guarantee since it might edge Washington off-center, only agreed

⁵³ UK Embassy Ankara to FO, 1 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115526 V1073/1194. This, at least, was Zorlu's recollection, which apparently differed somewhat from that of Macmillan, as Foreign Office minutes illustrate. Despite variations in these accounts, Macmillan and the Foreign Office threw their weight behind Zorlu's scheme. Satloff, p. 113 observes that Glubb and Duke mobilised the Arab Legion to

to “carefully consider” Zorlu’s proposition.⁵⁴ Dulles knew, even before Zorlu approached American officials, that Turkey favoured a Jordanian overture, so his reluctance to support Zorlu’s scheme was anything but spur-of-the-moment bewilderment.⁵⁵

His misgivings reflected careful calculation, and had their basis in a number of factors, including reports from America’s Middle Eastern intelligence network. Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Allen Dulles passed to State Department officials ominous warnings that pushing Jordan into Western alliances offered Moscow additional opportunities for expanding its Middle Eastern influence, particularly in Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. Attempting to ‘tilt’ Jordan away from neutrality and toward Iraq and Britain would lead Cairo, Damascus, and Riyadh to conclude Russia was their only viable means of support. DCI Dulles also predicted Jordanian adherence would undercut prospects of productive Israeli-Egyptian negotiations such as *Alpha*. The West should not appear to “turn its back” on Egypt; doing so could only widen Middle Eastern fissures, he concluded.⁵⁶

Despite his cool reception at Paris, Zorlu persisted in his bid for American support of a Turkish initiative in Jordan, expressing “anxiety to obtain more definite indication [of] United States views [on] the question of bringing Jordan in.” Hoover suggested informing Turkey that “we think [they] will have difficulty persuading Jordan to adhere,” although he did not categorically rule out all possibilities of Jordanian adherence. Dulles agreed, although he added that Jordanian accession made United States membership more

facilitate Turkish diplomatic endeavours in Amman. Hussein, p. 108 provides a brief description of Zorlu’s approach to the Jordanian King on November 2nd.

⁵⁴ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 27 October 1955; Office of the Permanent Representative to NATO to DOS, 26 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 71. George Perkins drafted the latter memorandum; Dulles neither saw nor approved it before leaving Paris for Geneva, so he could not have modified it to suit his own position.

⁵⁵ Memcon: H. Gork and DOS officials, 24 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 71. During this exchange, Gork revealed Turkish schemes. American officials notified Dulles immediately.

⁵⁶ A. Dulles to J.F. Dulles, 29 October 1955: *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 369.

problematic.⁵⁷ American diplomats transmitted this guidance to Ankara.⁵⁸ Upon learning of these caveats, the Foreign Office concluded Dulles was “using [these] as reason[s] for discouraging Jordan and Lebanon from joining the Pact.”⁵⁹ In light of Allen Dulles’ October dispatches to his brother, British officials had almost certainly assessed the Secretary’s motives accurately.

By early November, State Department disapproval of Jordanian accession had hardened. At that time, the Eisenhower Administration produced a National Intelligence Estimate recapitulating growth in dangerous intra-Arab competition. This escalating regional competition threatened American and Western interests in the Middle East, particularly regarding the viability of containment; Jordan’s departure from ‘neutrality’ would certainly heighten area tension, sharpen rivalries, and provide new Soviet opportunities. This estimate also predicted an even more belligerent stance from Nasser regarding existing mutual security arrangements if Washington or London recruited new Arab members.⁶⁰ Although Washington did not release this particular document to the Foreign Office, appropriate signals traveled to British diplomats throughout November.

Makins transmitted the first of these by reporting that any possible American support for Jordan’s entry was “linked...[to] a separate agreement on frontiers between Israel and Jordan.”⁶¹ In other words, only *after* an official Israeli-Jordanian settlement coalesced would Eisenhower and Dulles even *contemplate* backing Jordanian adherence. This qualification had grave implications for any Anglo-Turkish initiative since London had no specific plans for such efforts before proceeding with its overture to Jordan.

⁵⁷ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 31 October 1955; H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 29 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 75.

⁵⁸ DOS to US Embassy Ankara, 2 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 77.

⁵⁹ UK Embassy Ankara to FO, 2 November 1955; undated FO Minute, PRO FO 371/115526 V1075/1206. The Foreign Office minute shows British awareness of American opposition to pressure tactics in Jordan.

⁶⁰ NIE 30-4-55, 8 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 78.

⁶¹ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 3 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 1073/1222.

The second signal indicating American opposition to Jordanian entry came during an Anglo-American exchange of diplomatic notes. In an informal memorandum, the Foreign Office recommended the United States and Britain “put concerted pressure on Jordan to join the Pact.”⁶² In keeping with policies Dulles and Hoover had reinforced a few days earlier, the State Department reacted unenthusiastically, cautioning that “strengthening our friends in the Near East should not proceed in such a way...as to alienate Nasser completely.” Regarding Jordan specifically, American officials recommended the United States and Britain “follow present policy on Jordanian adherence until after [Special Envoy Robert Anderson’s] approach to Nasser.” Pressing Jordan to join the Pact would be acceptable only if Cairo proved unwilling to cooperate in Anderson’s upcoming top-secret effort to reach a settlement.⁶³

Macmillan and Eden Intensify Their Programme for Jordanian Accession,

November 1955

By this time, however, London had decided to ride the tiger—with or without American approval. In fact, efforts at securing Jordanian accession had been underway for several days. On the grounds that undue British pressure might unleash unpredictable forces, some in the Foreign Office echoed Hoover’s suggestion of caution and patience, but Macmillan and Eden decided to support pro-Pact Turkish representations to King

⁶² J.F. Dulles to DOS, 3 November 1955: *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 384.

⁶³ H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 5 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 387. Hoover did not pass these observations directly to British officials. Instead, he gave them to Dulles, who used them as the basis for his comments to Macmillan later that week. See notes 77 & 79 *infra*. Anderson’s mission, Project *Gamma*, an adjunct to *Alpha*, was an American plan for high-level and top-secret mediation between Cairo and Tel Aviv; the general feeling amongst Eisenhower’s inner circle was that *Gamma* would commence in late December 1955 or early January 1956. Caplan, pp. 220-242 and Takeyh, “Pan-Arabism” pp. 264-67 contain excellent and thorough accounts of *Gamma*’s development and execution. In his recent book on MI6, Dorris describes an immediate fore-runner to *Gamma*, Project *Chameleon*, in which CIA agents offered Israel military supplies subject to their agreement to make territorial concessions (p. 606). See also FROH; EBOH; Shamir, pp. 98-99; Shlaim, pp. 155-60; Ambrose, p. 317. Freiberger, p. 134, maintains that Washington did not inform British planners of *Gamma* until January 3rd 1956; this is incorrect. Such notification transpired in early November 1955.

Hussein.⁶⁴ Macmillan and others in his pro-accession faction apparently thought the benefits of Jordanian entry outweighed any potential negative consequences; a Foreign Office memorandum sanguinely outlined several advantages for Britain, noting that Jordan's membership offered London an opportunity to "consolidate the system and...[subsequently] bring in Lebanon. Syria will then waver and may fall to our side." Although most Foreign Office representatives anticipated an adverse Egyptian reaction—Ambassador Humphrey Trevelyan in Cairo soon warned of Nasser's unwillingness to "swallow [Jordanian accession] without a fight," particularly in light of earlier British pledges to avoid recruiting other Arab members—they dismissed anticipated Egyptian displeasure by rationalising that London "[could] not hope to please both sides in this matter," while predicting that strengthening British positions in Jordan might enhance "general [British] abilities to control and influence Middle Eastern developments."⁶⁵ Eden construed things somewhat differently, in that he expected Jordanian Pact membership to coerce Nasser into better behaviour, rather than prompting further resistance, but his conclusions regarding benefits accruing from Jordan's membership

⁶⁴ FO Memorandum, 2 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115526 V1073/1194 Annex A contains the first official British approval of the Jordanian initiative. This document, commenting on whether Britain should push for Jordan's accession, remarked that "there would be advantage in" bidding for accession. FO Memorandum: "Jordan and the Pact" 18 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/39 has further confirmation. PRO FO 371/115526 V1075/1206 and PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/20 illustrate Foreign Office disagreements regarding Jordanian policy. One official argued against "further pressure on Jordan" since such action "not only runs counter to U[nited] S[tates] policy but, if successful, might also provoke Nasser into some further wild action." G. Arthur concurred in Dulles' belief that "we [should] make one last determined effort to interest Nasser in a settlement...we should...avoid annoying Nasser by extending the Pact," although he thought Middle Eastern peace might be "chimerical." Similarly, Trevelyan feared a destabilising Anglo-ESS collision if London persisted with its Jordan option (Trevelyan, p. 57). These perspectives lost out. For Macmillan's decision to support Turkey, see UK Embassy Amman to FO, 4 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1218. Zorlu told Duke that Macmillan had agreed to "play the hand together as we did in Tehran." Zorlu also hoped for a rupture in relations between Jordan and Egypt, and reported Hussein's "inclination to agree to Jordan's Pact adhesion." Independent corroboration of Zorlu's latter allegation is unavailable, as Hussein does not provide extensive analysis in his memoirs. See also Persson, p. 275.

⁶⁵ FO Memorandum: "Jordanian Accession to the Pact," 9 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1235A; UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 18 November 1955; FO Minute, 23 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115653 VJ1051/36; Trevelyan, p. 56; Pappe, "Rule" p. 212. UK Embassy Cairo to FO, 14 March 1955, BDEEP:E&DME III no. 585 shows that Nasser made his anxiety regarding Jordanian accession quite clear to British officials.

matched those of the Foreign Office.⁶⁶ Facilitating southward Pact expansion bolstered Iraq and Jordan and, by extension, buttressed Britain's Hashemite-Gulf Arch.

Anglo-Turkish initiatives faced a major vulnerability in that most Jordanians, as before, had little interest in affiliation. For many, Nasser's pan-Arabist message resonated more strongly than Nuri's seeming political obsolescence, and even those who favoured Western ties displayed palpable caution. Jordan's Under Secretary of State informed Duke that Amman valued its links with Turkey and Iraq, and its formal alliance with Britain, but "saw no advantage" in Pact membership. In fact, aligning so indiscreetly "create[d] problems for [Jordan] both internally and with foreign relations." Duke wanted clarification—did this allow for "no prospect of Jordan adhering to the Pact?" The Under Secretary did not categorically rule out eventual accession, but reiterated "...at this stage membership create[s] too many difficulties for Jordan."⁶⁷ Ambassador Mallory received similar information; his sources in Amman revealed that although some Jordanian officials were "not completely unsympathetic" to the Pact, joining that alliance was out of the question—not even coercive measures could compel Jordan into membership.⁶⁸

On various occasions, King Hussein and a few Cabinet Ministers did show interest in accession, but typically subjected these expressions to diverse qualifications and 'hedges.' For instance, Hussein told British diplomats he needed to "consider carefully the internal and external situation, leaving [himself an] opportunity to mobilise a favourable climate of opinion." In other words, open affiliation required prudent preparation and exquisite timing, given the precarious mood in Jordan—any attempt to accelerate the accession pace threatened delicate political and social equilibria there. Shuckburgh strongly concurred with these sentiments, perceptively minuting: "This

⁶⁶ A. Eden Undated Minute, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/20.

⁶⁷ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115525 V1073/1165.

⁶⁸ US Embassy Amman to DOS, 1 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 76.

element is very important. We do not want to negotiate a new treaty only to find the Jordanian government cannot ratify it in Parliament." However, British officials—including Shuckburgh himself—either forgot or disregarded these insights during the three weeks that elapsed between the time he wrote them, and General Sir Gerald Templer's attempt to bring Amman into the Pact. Britain's bid, when it came, ignored Jordan's "internal and external situation," and did not allow Hussein "to mobilise a favourable climate of opinion."⁶⁹

Duke, in fact, set aside Jordanian pessimism quite early, interpreting Foreign Office instructions as an opportunity to "do [his] utmost in support of Turkish efforts to persuade the Jordan government to adhere, if possible immediately, to the Pact."⁷⁰ Accordingly, Duke began serious appeals to Jordanian officials, with the first exchange occurring on November 6th, during a conversation with Jordanian official Abdullah al-Rimawi. He indicated British "willing[ness] to consider sympathetically Jordan's wishes to replace the present [Anglo-Jordanian] treaty...[and to] give Jordan more sympathetic consideration of her military needs" if Jordan joined. Duke also suggested the "most effective way to...stop subversive intrigues in Jordan by Saudi Arabia and Egypt would be to show clearly Jordan was not to be intimidated or seduced by them."⁷¹ The next day,

⁶⁹ Jordanian Note to FO, 17 November 1955; undated C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/40; US Embassy Amman to DOS, 27 December 1955, USNA RG 59 785.00/12-2755; Hussein, p. 108. Persson, p. 279, alleges that Hussein misperceived Palestinian opposition to Pact adherence, but this evidence indicates otherwise. Podeh, *Quest*, p. 177 contends that by mid-November, King Hussein was "conclusively convinced of the advantages of Pact membership." This may be true, but does not mean Hussein favoured an immediate and public initiative for securing Jordanian accession.

⁷⁰ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 7 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1221. Duke's interpretation must have been correct, as the Foreign Office informed him that he had "done right to support Turkish efforts to accede...we cannot reverse our policy just because there is a danger of Nasser reacting badly." However, the Foreign Office recommended caution, suggesting that Duke avoid "further pressure...until we have assessed [the] impact upon [Jordan] of [your] action already taken." (FO to UK Embassy Amman, 7 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1224). Glubb, p. 330, maintains that "Jordan herself, not Britain, proposed Pact entry," while Eden, p. 338, asserts that British officials actually made the first offer.

⁷¹ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 6 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1224. Jordanian leaders had on earlier occasions attempted to revise their treaty with Britain, but British negotiators confounded these efforts (Satloff, pp. 99-104).

London officially confirmed Duke's mandate by noting "our policy is now to encourage Jordan to join [the] Pact."⁷² Macmillan's approach first sought to lure Amman by means of rewards, but, if this enticement failed, he was prepared to use threats and other punitive measures to achieve his goals.

With this guidance as a framework, on November 8th British diplomats in Amman expanded their efforts. Congruent with parallel Turkish efforts, Duke's courtship continued for many weeks, assuming different forms on various occasions, but always geared toward a single objective: securing Jordanian accession.⁷³ He informed Jordan's Prime Minister that Pact membership represented "an excellent opportunity [and] a good bargain for Jordan...which did not increase her commitments but greatly strengthened her general position and prestige in the Middle East and improved her chances of material assistance in all forms."⁷⁴ His stance on possible Egyptian and Saudi reactions within Jordan—an issue of paramount concern to Hussein—swung erratically between extremes. On some occasions Duke exhibited outright contempt for these potential British adversaries, whereas on others he clearly feared their political capabilities.⁷⁵

While Duke intensified pressure in Amman, Macmillan again attempted to secure American support, but learned United States officials, far from swinging into line behind British strategies in Jordan, had hardened in their resistance to any bold overtures there. Macmillan undoubtedly hoped to turn Dulles from his cautious October position to a stance of mild, if not enthusiastic, support. An Anglo-American meeting in Switzerland

⁷² Commonwealth Relations Office to UK Commissioner in Pakistan, 7 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1223A

⁷³ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 8 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1234 details Turkish efforts; see also Shmuelovitz, p. 205. Zorlu found that although Jordanian leaders had some interest in accession, "they...are now trying to obtain maximum benefits from doing so, [by taking] the hard line that Jordan should get all she wants [and] should drive a hard bargain."

⁷⁴ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 8 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1235.

⁷⁵ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 8 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1234 illustrates Duke's fear; he noted that the "longer [Jordan] delayed [entry]...the more opportunity would [emerge] for Egyptian and Saudi money and intrigue" to confuse Jordan.

provided a pretext for this demarche. The first significant conversation at Geneva apropos Jordan took place between Francis Russell of the State Department and Shuckburgh. Although Russell did not rule out Jordanian accession, he outlined Washington's attitude that “[our] number one Middle Eastern priority should be to rescue Egypt from Soviet alignment.” A high-powered bid for Jordanian accession probably made sense only “in circumstances in which we in effect [wanted] to isolate Egypt,” which was manifestly not the case in November 1955.⁷⁶

Given Russell's moderately nebulous presentation—he had not categorically eliminated southern Pact expansion as an option—Shuckburgh could reasonably have left this conversation with an impression that the United States did not object to Anglo-Turkish pressure on Jordan. However, the next day's discussions most certainly ended any such illusions. Macmillan advocated “mov[ing] ahead vigorously” with Pact expansion, noting: “...one of the first things [to do] was to bring in Jordan.” This proposal failed; Dulles treated Macmillan to a long soliloquy on the disadvantages of Jordanian affiliation. According to British accounts of this exchange, the American Secretary of State “was very uncertain whether we should go forward any further [on the Pact] without careful thought,” suggesting that “introduc[ing] the Pact to Israel's neighbors presented a new problem and made it more difficult for the United States to support the Pact [so] he rather wondered whether it was wise” to push for Jordanian, Syrian, and Lebanese accession.⁷⁷ Dulles did not want *any* Pact countries to border the Middle East's Jewish state until Arabs and Israelis had concluded a general peace, an outcome with “doubtful” short-term prospects.

⁷⁶ Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and F. Russell, 8 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/24.

⁷⁷ Memcon: H. Macmillan and J.F. Dulles, 9 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/24. Shuckburgh attended this meeting too, which undercuts the unconvincing protests he later made regarding his supposed unawareness of American resistance to Jordanian membership

Macmillan argued Israeli leaders would offer no objections to Jordanian membership, but Dulles immediately dismissed Macmillan's assertion. Only a Western security guarantee—an option neither Washington nor London preferred—could keep Israel quiescent, he argued. Additionally, Dulles questioned the Pact's underlying strength, remarking on its lack of "solid foundations," since political instability plagued member states Iran and Iraq. Dulles also warned Shuckburgh of American reservations against "building up the Northern Tier too ostentatiously." He informed Shuckburgh and a group of British officials that "keeping [the alliance] a paper pact might be better," presumably implying Britain should not go to extreme lengths for such a frail configuration of states.⁷⁸ Macmillan responded by alluding to possible Jordanian initiatives: Britain "*might* go ahead" with Pact expansion, he hinted, and the United States "will decide on its position."⁷⁹ Macmillan probably wanted to protect his flank by notifying Dulles that a *fait accompli* loomed. A few weeks earlier, Operation *Bonaparte*'s unilateral nature (see Chapter Four) brought an angry American response to Britain's blatant lack of consultation.⁸⁰ Macmillan's subtle notification in this case may have been his device to prevent recurrence of the Buraimi discord.

While Dulles admonished British authorities over their questionable Middle Eastern policies, dispatches from British diplomats in Amman also augured poorly for their prospects of securing Jordanian membership. The Foreign Office learned of growing Jordanian concerns that "Egyptian propaganda and Saudi money [will] stimulate internal

⁷⁸ *Descent*, 10 November 1955, p. 299.

⁷⁹ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 9 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 391 (italics mine). Macmillan was less than entirely forthright with Dulles on this occasion, since London's Jordanian overture was already in full swing. Britain was well beyond the point where its initiative *might* take place. In the British account (PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/24) Macmillan informed Dulles that Britain planned continuation of "its policy of [Pact] support without unnecessary provocation to Egypt until the United States Government decided upon its line." Whether launching an all-out bid to gain Jordanian accession posed "unnecessary provocation to Egypt" is certainly a relevant question.

⁸⁰ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 28 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 363. Dulles expressed "annoyance" about Britain's unilateral move, particularly the "absence of any prior information about it."

reactions" if Jordan joined the Pact, although King Hussein told Duke he presently leaned in favour of accession.⁸¹ Jordanian fears regarding ESS activity were entirely justified, since this struggle marked a perfect opportunity for post-*Bonaparte* Saudi countermoves. Most British officials did not seem to understand that by pushing the issue of Jordanian alignment toward a hasty conclusion, they merely emphasised their own vulnerability.⁸² Podeh outlines two other events that led Cairo and Riyadh to escalate the intensity of their Jordanian activities. First, late-October ESS fruition meant these states could now direct their attention toward Jordan, having overcome more pressing diplomatic challenges. Second, Jordan seemed to tilt toward Pact membership, necessitating an ESS countermove to maintain Arab political equilibrium.⁸³ I accept Podeh's first factor; the second is more difficult to sustain, as it implies preponderant regional forces aligned against Nasser, which was not the case in late 1955.

Despite repeated American reservations toward his ongoing Pact initiative, and dangerous rumblings in Amman, Macmillan intensified these "Machiavellian schemes," although Eden retreated somewhat from his earlier zeal, instructing British diplomats "not...to press Jordan too hard." His controversial Guildhall speech of 9 November 1955, in which he suggested Israeli concessions to facilitate a Middle Eastern settlement, may have represented a transition to 'soft-sell' tactics for securing Jordanian membership, and perhaps an attempt to dampen inevitable Egyptian criticism as well. Minister of State

⁸¹ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 9 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115528 V1073/1246.

⁸² Duke provides an excellent example of British myopia toward Arab cause-and-effect; when Hussein fretted about Saudi and Egyptian power, the Ambassador advocated that the Foreign Office generate "a good push now...[to] give [Jordan] the necessary courage." Shuckburgh, by contrast, clearly understood the nature of this Arab struggle, noting his certainty that "Egypt and Saudi Arabia are doing all they can to undermine our position in Jordan." (*Descent*, 19 November 1955, p. 301). He also advocated countering Saudi bribery in Jordan by "increasing [our] payments to [Jordanian media]...to ensure that our publicity is more widely distributed." (PRO FO 371/115532 V1073/1336). British expectations of possible Saudi countermoves in *Bonaparte*'s aftermath are in a 21 November 1955 memorandum, PRO FO 371/114269 EA1081/542G and COSC Confidential Annex, COS (55) 95th Meeting, 21 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/539.

⁸³ Podeh, *Quest*, pp. 180-81, 193.

Selwyn Lloyd occupied middle ground between Eden's caution and Macmillan's enthusiasm; he advocated a temporary diminuendo, suggesting Britain "should not make any offer which look[s] like bargaining since Jordan [will] seize any such opportunity to raise its most extravagant demands." However, Jordan might "waver indefinitely in the present moment of crisis and opportunity" if Britain failed to press Pact membership at some point, he thought.⁸⁴

Although a joint Anglo-Turkish endeavour marked initial efforts to secure Jordanian accession, by mid-November Britain had sole responsibility for this initiative.⁸⁵ Zorlu acknowledged "it was now up to Britain to get [Jordan] in."⁸⁶ This newly exclusive British purview, in combination with Duke's increasingly shrill requests for "firm offers now of substantial military equipment...to induce the Jordanian government to undertake [a] commitment to join the Pact" compelled Britain to accelerate its pace in Jordan.⁸⁷ Duke, in fact, emerged as foremost British champion of Jordanian accession, and seemed near hysteria while King Hussein and his ministers pondered benefits and costs of Pact membership, expressing his conviction that "we must act very soon if we are to do any good...even a few days might make all the difference...the longer the Jordanians are in taking a decision the more chance there is of [foreign] pressure beating them down."

Duke and other diplomats thought favourable Jordanian alignment represented the key to "preserving and extending our Middle Eastern influence." British success in Jordan might catalyse a fundamental Middle Eastern re-alignment on preferential terms by

⁸⁴ S. Lloyd to H. Macmillan, 10 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115653 VJ1051/28. Oren, "Winter" and Freiberger, pp. 129, 131 discuss Eden's Guildhall speech in the context of Jordanian accession. Dulles apparently perceived a connection between these events as well; see 267th NSC Meeting, 21 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 81. For full text of the Guildhall speech, see the *Times*, 10 November 1955, p. 10. James, p. 429 and Rothwell, p. 183 assert that Eden opposed pushing Jordan too hard to adhere; his early-November misgivings may account for these interpretations.

⁸⁵ Horne, p. 369.

⁸⁶ UK Embassy Ankara to FO, 10 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115653 VJ1051/22.

⁸⁷ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 10 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115653 VJ1051/24.

“encourage[ing] Lebanon to do likewise...Syria would then have to consider the situation carefully if she were surrounded by Pact governments.”⁸⁸

Initiating such sweeping changes allowed Britain to seize the initiative from Nasser, while halting erosion of its regional positions. So far as British officials were concerned, any delays in pushing Jordan toward Pact membership were unacceptable. Minister of State in the Foreign Office Anthony Nutting urged Chancellor of the Exchequer ‘Rab’ Butler to expedite financial arrangements for Britain’s gift to Jordan of ten Vampire fighters, since this issue had become linked with Foreign Office proposals for immediate Jordanian affiliation. Britain’s gift was “urgent” as Jordan “now [stood] at the brink of accession...she only needs some substantial offer to push her over.” Timely delivery of the Vampires would “establish the right climate and might even turn the scales in the Pact matter.”⁸⁹

This gratis weaponry constituted merely one prong of London’s complex approach; through Duke, Britain also intervened in internal Jordanian affairs, seeking to assure Hashemite membership. British officials worried Pact-associated strain might cause governmental disintegration in Jordan. Increasingly widespread rumours that Prime Minister Said al-Mufti—who initially seemed strongly to favour accession upon taking office in May, but now apparently resented Anglo-Turkish pressure—might go so far as to resign rather than joining the Pact posed particular concern. For London, al-Mufti’s abdication posed a potential disaster, as his resignation would trigger governmental dissolution, thereby imposing delays of unknown duration on British plans for *immediate* Jordanian accession. Duke therefore lectured al-Mufti in mid-November, upbraiding the

⁸⁸ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 10 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115653 VJ1051/27. The Foreign Office actively tested Syrian waters, hoping to entice Damascus into Pact membership, but this initiative faced long odds, particularly since Syria had already formalised its alliance with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. See UK Embassy Damascus to FO, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/115526 V1073/1198.

leader for his selection of “a singularly unfortunate time to [resign].” Duke challenged the Prime Minister’s patriotism, remarking that resignation was a “grave disservice to his country,” and cast aspersions on al-Mufti’s courage by suggesting that if he did in fact quit, he “only did so to escape oral pressure to bring Jordan into the Pact.”⁹⁰

Predictably, Duke’s ‘hard sell’ tactics backfired. Al-Mufti laughed last. Instead of resigning immediately—thereby providing some time for King Hussein to form a new government and keep Pact initiatives on track—the Prime Minister waited until events climaxed in December, when time was a luxury Britain could ill afford.⁹¹ His last-minute resignation threw British plans into a tumult and eradicated any possibility of Jordanian accession.

By far the most prominent aspect of British courtship, though, was the extensive package of material assistance London offered to Jordan in exchange for a promise to adhere. As outlined above, these efforts began in early November, intensified a few weeks later with Britain’s gift of Vampire aircraft, and by fits and starts expanded to include much, much more. ‘Austerity measures’ then in place to deal with chronic British imbalance of payments posed significant obstacles, however. Despite the “gloomy picture in Jordan,” Exchequer shortages prompted Macmillan to “doubt whether we can undertake a solid prior commitment [for] Arab Legion reinforcement.”⁹² His doubts dissipated, however, when Cabinet Ministers agreed to make significant resources available, to signal Jordan “we mean business.”⁹³

⁸⁹ A. Nutting to R. Butler, 14 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115653 VJ1051/26; Eden, p. 343. See also the *Times*, 9 November 1955, p. 7.

⁹⁰ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 16 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115638 VJ1015/26. Oren, “Winter” describes al-Mufti’s Pact enthusiasm upon becoming Prime Minister in May 1955.

⁹¹ Satloff, p. 117 and Podeh, *Quest*, p. 185 analyze al-Mufti’s curious mid- and late-November attitudes.

⁹² FO Memorandum: “Jordan and the Pact,” 18 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/39. Nutting, p. 23 and Rothwell, p. 168 describe Britain’s 1955 financial crisis.

⁹³ FO Memorandum: “Jordan and the Pact,” 24 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 V1073/1336. Shuckburgh composed this document and sent it to Kirkpatrick and Eden, who concurred in his conclusions. Podeh, *Quest*, p. 178 suggests that British authorities in London dragged their feet regarding

Cabinet decisions on this score probably owed much to Duke's latest situation reports. He asserted giving weapons to Jordan did *not* represent succumbing to "blackmail." Instead, by linking specific, concrete proposals—including monetary, political, and military offers—to Jordanian Pact membership, London could transcend mere "indefinite assurances" which in themselves "would likely lead to...violent public demonstrations" since the Pact "is not popular in Jordan either in the Parliament or in general public opinion." Britain needed to ante up and purchase Jordanian loyalties, Duke thought, since recent events—particularly the Egyptian arms deal—made "maintain[ing] Jordan in a neutral position impossible."⁹⁴ Duke pegged Jordan's 'price' at twenty million pounds annually and an extra Arab Legion division, although Foreign Office and Chiefs of Staff representatives favoured greater parsimony.⁹⁵ Frenzied bargaining transpired in Whitehall during November's last week. Several Ministries advocated their own plans for the composition and extent of Jordan's package. Significant points of consensus emerging from this bureaucratic jockeying included a conclusion that Jordan's Pact entry lacked *any* military value or importance; the significance of membership rested in a political dimension instead.⁹⁶ Officials in London also agreed Duke's suggestions represented excess, given British economic frailty.

Macmillan updated his fellow Ministers on November 24th, informing them: "we should now direct our main effort [at] bringing Jordan into the Pact as quickly as possible." In terms of possible hazards involved with this overture, Macmillan did not mention any specific dangers beyond "hav[ing] to make some concessions [to Jordan],"

Jordanian accession, instead of moving with alacrity as British diplomats in Jordan fervently suggested. I counter Podeh's assertion by noting that launching a major policy revision such as this necessarily required time to obtain bureaucratic clearances, Cabinet approval, resource commitments, and so forth.

⁹⁴ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 22 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/46.

⁹⁵ According to *Descent*, 22 November 1955, p. 303, Duke suggested doubling Jordan's annual subsidy, meaning a twenty million pound yearly payment.

⁹⁶ COSC (55) 136th Meeting: Military Aid for Jordan, 29 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/50 contains the strongest expression of this conclusion.

which, he suggested, Britain “should try to minimise.”⁹⁷ Although Macmillan used this opportunity to vilify Egypt and Saudi Arabia, his risk appraisal did not include a discussion of Pact unpopularity in Jordan, nor the possibility that rival Jordanian factions might rampage if Britain made a heavy-handed bid to compel Jordan into accession, although he had received information from many sources warning of these trends. Ministers therefore remained unaware regarding the full risks of Macmillan’s “Machiavellian scheme,” although their ability to delay or postpone his initiative—even if they had wanted to—is doubtful, since Eden and Macmillan gave this project unqualified support. In fact, these two cemented their ‘activist’ alliance soon after this meeting, thus heading off any possibility of Cabinet resistance. Macmillan confided to his Prime Minister that Britain had to “shore up the tottering Middle East,” not only to protect the Pact and British prestige, but also to strengthen Nuri’s position and end regional Iraqi isolation; at recent meetings in Baghdad, Iraqi leaders implored Macmillan to secure additional Arab membership for the Pact. This reinforcement might succeed if Britain “got some other Arab states to join...the first must be Jordan...if we do not get Jordan into the Pact now, she will drift out of our control.”⁹⁸

With Britain’s pro-accession faction now securely ascendant, the Foreign Office needed to establish a coherent package for Jordan, integrating the plans and programmes of various Ministries. Shuckburgh orchestrated British incentives, which, by their final iteration, entailed a full range of positive and negative inducements, including financial and military support, favourable treaty revision, and ultimata that London “regard[s] this as a vital choice between East and West” and “[will] not...continue [its] existing support for Jordan if she refuses to cooperate.” In an explicit reference to Amman’s unpopular

⁹⁷ PRO CAB 128 (55) 43rd Conclusions, 24 November 1955.

⁹⁸ H. Macmillan to A. Eden, 25 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 PM/55/172; Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and G. Allen, 13 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 91.

alliance with Britain, British representatives had instructions to emphasise to Hussein “bilateral pacts are no longer a la mode” and the future lay instead with the multilateral Turko-Iraqi Pact.⁹⁹

Macmillan’s decision to delegate responsibility for this initiative to Shuckburgh is surprising. Although Shuckburgh played a role in Macmillan’s initial decision to bid for Jordan’s entry, he entertained doubts and second thoughts throughout the entire evolution of this project. By no means did Shuckburgh fully support Jordanian membership, and he frequently questioned the wisdom of raising already-volatile Middle Eastern stakes. Once British efforts to attain Jordanian Pact membership gained momentum, he suspected they might “tear Jordan into pieces.”¹⁰⁰

Shuckburgh also downplayed the severity of Major General John Bagot Glubb’s warnings. The legendary ‘Glubb Pasha’, who by 1955 had commanded the Arab Legion for nearly two decades, held significant prestige among Britain’s political elite, but Shuckburgh displayed no such enchantment.¹⁰¹ Throughout November, Glubb sent numerous admonitory dispatches to London, predicting Jordan’s complete dissolution as a political entity if Britain did not launch an immediate ‘rescue operation’ via Pact expansion. Glubb identified Saudi Arabia and Egypt as principal British adversaries, while assessing the Jordanian government quite negatively, remarking on Hussein’s “you[th] and bewilder[ment],” and labeling Jordan’s pro-British ruling class as “lack[ing] initiative and moral courage.” His prognosis was a collapse in Britain’s Hashemite-Gulf Arch, with predictable ramifications for IPC and other British regional oil interests, in the

⁹⁹ FO Memorandum: “Jordan and the Pact,” 24 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 V1073/1336. This document shows Britain’s ‘package offer’ as a work in progress, subject to input from many different agencies and individuals. See also *Descent*, 5 December 1955, p. 308.

¹⁰⁰ *Descent*, 19 December 1955, p. 313; Satloff, p. 114.

¹⁰¹ Although Shuckburgh noted that the Chief of Britain’s Imperial General Staff, General Sir Gerald Templer, exhibited “great admiration” for Glubb, his own mistrust regarding the man’s judgment had brewed for well over a year; see *Descent*, 19 August 1954, p. 236, and 13 June 1955, p. 260.

absence of bold initiatives. He concluded a “British fiasco in Jordan will end Britain in the Middle East.”¹⁰²

On another occasion, Glubb described various Soviet conspiracies to overthrow Hussein and eliminate Jordanian ties with Britain by fomenting “open rebellion” in Jordan.¹⁰³ Earlier that month, Glubb had warned of time’s essence: “...the longer [Jordan] delay[s] in joining...the more opportunity there will be for Egyptian and Saudi money and intrigue” to influence the government.¹⁰⁴ He also stressed Jordan’s “immensely significant position” as a lever by which Britain could isolate Syria and buttress Iraq. If Jordan did not join, Iraq might “give up” on other Arabs and “go into isolation.” He thought it “worthwhile to go a very long way and incur heavy expense in order to swing Jordan into the right camp at this crisis.”¹⁰⁵ If the regime in Baghdad opted for a regional strategy of “isolation,” destabilising consequences could easily ensue. In light of Iraq’s religious, linguistic, and cultural connections with other Arab states, domestic sentiment almost certainly opposed a rupture in ties with the wider Arab community. When public moods diverge from official policy so dramatically, upheaval often results, particularly when in combination with pre-existing volatility—a feature that pervaded Iraq’s political landscape.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² J.B. Glubb Memorandum, 28 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 V1073/1348. Surprisingly, Glubb brooked no possibility that the “British fiasco” he so feared might result from aggressively courting Jordan. PRO FO 371/115528 V1073/1246 has another of his apocalyptic assessments, in which he asserts that “...this is...a moment of crisis and of opportunity.” PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1051/57 contains additional grim situation reports from Glubb.

¹⁰³ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 18 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115639 VJ1015/27. B. Morris, pp. 355, 357 also discusses these activities. He does not mention Soviet involvement.

¹⁰⁴ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 8 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115527 V1073/1234.

¹⁰⁵ J.B. Glubb Memorandum, 9 November 1955, contained in UK Embassy Amman to FO, 10 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115653 VJ1051/27. Gallman, pp. 68, 70 and Macmillan, pp. 654, 656 confirm Glubb’s estimate of Iraqi isolation. In late November, obviously referring to Jordan, Nuri strongly suggested Pact expansion to include at least one more Arab state. See also Podeh, *Quest*, p. 180 and Takeyh, “Pan-Arabism” p. 258.

¹⁰⁶ Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and G. Allen, 13 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 91 contains Shuckburgh’s perspective on this problem. NIE 36.2-56, 17 July 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 435 is also valuable.

Shuckburgh placed little stock in Glubb's observations, curtly dismissing them as "desperate telegrams of doom." Shuckburgh remarked that he "did not trust [these] panics," noting that in contrast to Glubb's pessimistic tendencies, he thought Britain "ha[s] good cards left in its hands."¹⁰⁷ Perhaps recognising the contempt with which Shuckburgh had greeted his previous analyses, at the end of November Glubb abruptly shifted his assessment regarding the possibility of unrest in Jordan, thereby initiating what would become a well-established oscillatory pattern.¹⁰⁸ Despite his earlier tendency to view internal security ramifications adversely, Glubb's new conclusions constituted an apotheosis of optimism. He asserted a combination of British military force and Arab Legion power "could certainly hold [the] situation" if unrest broke out. Glubb also postulated a direct relationship between the generosity of British inducements and prospects for domestic tranquillity in Jordan, going so far as to assure London that if Britain made a "large enough [offer] there would be no, repeat no, internal security situation."¹⁰⁹ Despite his lengthy Middle Eastern tenure, Glubb's insight regarding things Jordanian failed him on this occasion. When riots broke out in mid-December, the Arab Legion—under Glubb's direct command—temporarily lost cohesion and Jordan's internal security situation veered toward chaos. His initial, gloomy predictions hit much closer to reality.

As November neared its end, in fact, omens in Jordan proved anything but propitious. John Slade-Baker, retired British Lieutenant-Colonel and roving *Sunday Times* correspondent, found most Jordanian Cabinet Ministers exhibited palpable hesitancy regarding Pact membership. Prime Minister al-Mufti, for instance, told Slade-Baker Pact association made sense for Iraq, but not Jordan. Soviet proximity to Iraq

¹⁰⁷ *Descent*, 19 November 1955, p. 301.

¹⁰⁸ Pappe, "Egypt" p. 169 notes that frequent and wild fluctuations often characterised Glubb's strategic assessments, not only regarding Pact issues but on Middle Eastern affairs generally.

meant Baghdad needed direct Western support; Amman's primary enemy, by contrast, was Israel, and in that struggle the Pact was irrelevant or even harmful.¹¹⁰ Other officials confided to Slade-Baker that bringing pressure "of any kind to bear upon Jordan" represented a "great mistake," as forcing issues might cause governmental collapse. A better course of action, these officials thought, entailed slow, patient and methodical efforts to "recondition [Jordanian] minds." Even Interior Minister Hazza al-Majali, who emerged as the most zealous pro-British partisan in al-Mufti's Cabinet, and later took enormous personal and political risks attempting to secure Pact accession, told Slade-Baker the time "was not yet ripe" for an immediate British initiative. Not only were Cabinet Ministers nearly unanimous in their Pact opposition, but public opinion ran strongly against the alliance as well.¹¹¹

Like Slade-Baker, Duke also knew the Pact suffered from extreme unpopularity in Jordan, but thought potential benefits of "pushing [al-Mufti's Cabinet] to a definite policy, which at present they seem to lack, [since] Jordan has been drifting too long with no fixed course," outweighed any concern for adverse public moods.¹¹² A few days before British emissaries visited Amman in an all-out attempt to secure Jordanian membership, the Foreign Office learned of Slade-Baker's inquiries, but completely disregarded these revelations, including his belief that "[British] pressure would have a bad effect" in Jordan. The only meaningful attention British officials gave Slade-Baker's investigative efforts was their fear that, as a result of his findings, the correspondent might submit a newspaper article arguing "H[er] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] should not

¹⁰⁹ J.B. Glubb to FO, 29 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/47.

¹¹⁰ JS-BD (Box 4 Book 1), 29 November 1955.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 28 November 1955. Slade-Baker's 30 November 1955 diary entry also notes widespread Jordanian resistance to accession. Satloff, p. 115, asserts that Jordan's Cabinet was willing to support Pact membership in mid and late November; his conclusion is at variance with Slade-Baker's investigation.

¹¹² UK Embassy Amman to FO, 18 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115639 VJ1015/27; Persson, p. 278. Duke's belief that Britain could entirely circumvent public opinion in a country with trappings (although clearly not pure forms) of democracy surely hindered effective British policymaking.

try to induce Jordan to join the [Pact]." A few days later, his *Sunday Times* piece "Reaping Tares in the Middle East" opposed "bringing pressure" on Jordan to avoid "antagonising Jordanian public opinion and damaging Anglo-Egyptian relations." Instead of taking Slade-Baker's concerns seriously, the Foreign Office requested its News Department to examine ways of obscuring the journalist's insights.¹¹³ Events vindicated Slade-Baker, demonstrating the accuracy of his observations. Paying heed, rather than seeking to discredit the correspondent, probably represented a wise Foreign Office course. More often than not, their own sources of information—Glubb and Duke—filed inaccurate or incomplete briefs.

Tiger of Amman? Templer into the Breach, December 1955

Despite this distant thunder, Shuckburgh persisted. On November's last day he advised Macmillan that British leaders needed to establish "by what methods we are going to pressure [King Hussein] to join the Pact." Shuckburgh's own insight indicated Duke probably lacked adequate stature to consummate British initiatives effectively; he needed assistance from a special and prominent delegation with significant authority to make decisions and strike deals. To lead this mission, Shuckburgh—in close consultation with Kirkpatrick—suggested General Sir Gerald Templer, Chief of Britain's Imperial General Staff, thereby assuring Britain's demarche commanded the highest profile.¹¹⁴

Available evidence does not adequately explain Shuckburgh's motives in selecting Templer as British envoy, and many disagreed with his choice. British Wing Commander and Hussein confidante Jock Dalgleish assessed this decision as a "great

¹¹³ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 1 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1051/60. Whether the FO News Department actually exerted influence with the *Sunday Times* attempting to proscribe Slade-Baker's composition is unclear; if so, they failed. *ST*, 4 December 1955, p. 9 has his article.

¹¹⁴ At least a week earlier, Shuckburgh began contemplating a high-level British emissary; his initial suggestions were Templer or a Cabinet Minister (C.A.E. Shuckburgh to A. Eden, 24 November 1955, PRO FO 115532 V1073/1336). Macmillan subsequently approved Shuckburgh's 'Templer option.' See C.A.E. Shuckburgh to H. Macmillan & H. Macmillan Minute, 30 November 1955, FO 371/115655 VJ1051/54, and *Descent*, 30 November 1955, p. 306.

mistake,” and in Cairo, Trevelyan preferred that Duke, rather than a military potentate, act as British messenger.¹¹⁵ Robert Satloff suggests that by choosing Templer, the Foreign Office employed “speed, style, and flair,” at the expense of “substance,” in seeking Hussein’s acquiescence.¹¹⁶ Uriel Dann assesses Templer’s role as counterproductive to British strategic interests, since the “presence of a British general presuming to dictate policy to an Arab state supposedly sovereign but in fact in British bondage worked wonders to demonstrate the character of the British connection.”¹¹⁷

A simple explanation as to why Britain designated Templer would reflect Shuckburgh’s sentiment that high-level participation “reinforce[d] the [mission’s] importance,” although British motivations probably entailed additional complexity.¹¹⁸ One factor may have been Templer’s relative familiarity with Middle Eastern leaders; he had conferred with heads of state in Jordan, Iraq and Libya earlier that year during a trip to the region, and recently attended an important conference in Baghdad.¹¹⁹ Additionally, Templer enjoyed great international esteem by virtue of his successes a few years earlier during the ‘Malayan Emergency.’ Shuckburgh probably hoped to parlay that prestige into Middle Eastern accomplishments for Britain.

Another aspect of Templer’s selection may have entailed British apprehension over recent Arab political wrangling. In a memorandum to Macmillan outlining Templer’s role, Shuckburgh referred to Egyptian Fieldmarshal Abdel Hakim Amer. Amer—at that time Chief of Staff of Egypt’s military forces, and soon to gain command of joint Egyptian, Syrian, and Saudi forces within their alliance—visited Amman in late November, and during his trip probably discussed ESS expansion with Jordanian

¹¹⁵ Lamb, p. 189; Trevelyan, p. 57. Trevelyan opposed London’s Jordanian gambit in the first place, and expected Templer’s selection only to complicate matters.

¹¹⁶ Satloff, p. 116.

¹¹⁷ Dann, *Radicalism*, p. 27.

¹¹⁸ FO Memorandum: “Jordan and the Pact,” 24 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 V1073/1336.

officials.¹²⁰ Shuckburgh thought Amer's journey necessitated immediate British "countermoves."¹²¹

Templer's mission, of course, represented Shuckburgh's 'countermove', but why Amer's visit made a riposte so vital is a difficult question to answer. This issue may indicate a serious lapse in the collective judgment of Macmillan, the Foreign Office, Duke, and Glubb; apparently they feared Amer's visit would spur Hussein into ESS alignment. Glubb and Duke had warned London of "inevitable [Jordanian] gravitation toward [Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia] and so into a Communist orbit" if Britain delayed.¹²² On a separate occasion, Duke reported the King as concluding: "the best thing to do was to conclude a treaty with Egypt." In Cabinet Minister Fawzi al-Mulki—whom British officials anticipated as successor to current Prime Minister Said al-Mufti—Hussein had an "obedient tool" willing to consummate such a covenant, Duke thought. This arrangement, Glubb noted, enjoyed "full Parliamentary support in Jordan" and Jordanians would "welcome it as a 100% patriotic Arab development." Such a treaty linking Cairo and Amman would deal a "serious blow" to British prestige. Incidentally, British officials had clashed with al-Mulki earlier in his political career, because he showed insufficient zeal in suppressing nationalist printed material and other anti-British 'propaganda.'¹²³

Duke also feared Jordan's shifting political balance. Although his earlier efforts to stifle national elections had temporarily succeeded in curtailing "extreme elements" from

¹¹⁹ *Descent*, 13 June 1955, p. 260; *Times*, 22 November 1955, p. 8.

¹²⁰ Dann, *Radicalism*, pp. 27-28; Martin; Pappe, "Egypt" p. 167; Podeh, *Quest*, p. 182.

¹²¹ C.A.E. Shuckburgh to H. Macmillan, 30 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1051/54; Satloff, p. 117; Pappe, "Rule" p. 214. Pappe strongly condemns Templer's role, noting that Shuckburgh's decision was "utterly wrong...[and] aggravated an already charged and tense situation."

¹²² UK Embassy Amman to FO, 18 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115639 VJ1015/27.

¹²³ Satloff, p. 87.

increasing their representation, Duke knew Britain could not stem this tide forever.¹²⁴

Unless London halted current trends, West Bank Palestinians would soon gain a Cabinet majority of six members to five over ‘Transjordanians’ from the country’s eastern half. This demographic transition boded ill for British interests—nearly all Palestinians favoured connections with Nasser, at Hashemite and British expense. Perceiving Jordanian accession as a meaningful solution to this particular issue is at best difficult, since Pact membership would have locked Jordan into a pro-Western alignment *against* prevailing public sentiment. The obvious domestic unpopularity of such a course was potentially destabilising.¹²⁵ Brokering comprehensive Middle Eastern peace arrangements, including provisions for a Palestinian homeland, offered another possibility. By removing restive elements, such a settlement might establish political equilibrium in Jordan. Time constraints no doubt compelled British leaders to reject this option, however.

Glubb echoed Duke’s sense of foreboding. He assessed current Jordanian circumstances as more unfavourable than any he had observed during his entire 26 year Arab tenure. Glubb and Duke were accurate regarding Jordanian volatility, and may have been right about al-Mulki’s Nasserite leanings, but erred in ascribing anti-Western motives to Hussein. Although some rumours indicated the contrary, in reality he showed no inclination to move decisively toward Cairo. His political sentiments were typically (and understandably) pro-Western, and, at worst, veered to benevolent neutrality when circumstances demanded accommodation of nationalism. British fears that Hussein

¹²⁴ JPS Memorandum, 17 January 1951, *BDEEP:E&DME II* no. 91 shows that Whitehall had known for years of these unfavourable demographic trends, and their implications for Jordanian political developments. Pappe, “Rule” p. 207 suggests that ‘controlling’ electoral processes in ways that minimised anti-British and anti-Hashemite political representation constituted an important facet in long-term British strategy in Jordan.

¹²⁵ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 16 December 1955, FO 371/115639 VJ1015/40; Persson, p. 279. Precisely when Duke realised that a Palestinian Cabinet majority was imminent is unclear, but he had known of this general trend for several months. See also Oren, “Winter” and Dann, *Survival*, p. 11.

teetered on the brink of an irrevocable shift to a new, anti-Western posture seem misguided, particularly in retrospect, and probably stemmed in large part from Glubb's dislike, distrust, and contempt for Hussein. Late November dispatches from Amman describing imminent Egyptian-Jordanian alliance also contain Glubb's derision of the King as an "erratic and irresponsible" monarch who exercised "no leadership." The two had clashed on several previous occasions that year, most recently during an early November Cabinet session, in which Hussein castigated Glubb's Legion leadership. Bad feelings obviously lingered.¹²⁶ That Glubb allowed his personality conflict with Hussein to cloud his judgment damaged British efforts at formulating sound Middle Eastern policy, and constituted his second—but not last—significant judgmental lapse regarding Jordanian Pact membership (the first being his misplaced optimism in Legionary capacity for maintaining, and if necessary restoring, internal order).¹²⁷

In any event, official assessments from Jordan maintained momentum in London for dispatching a special delegation. Shuckburgh selected Levant Department Head Michael Rose as Templer's assistant, presumably hoping Rose's political acumen might complement Templer's military sagacity. Rose had none of Shuckburgh's ambivalence about Jordan's future. Shortly before leaving for Jordan, he remarked Britain "must get Jordan into the Pact."¹²⁸ Templer and Rose departed London in early December, offers of British assistance in hand, their aim to get Jordan's government "to commit itself to accession in a public statement" before they left Amman. If that primary objective proved

¹²⁶ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 21 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1051/57. Not only Glubb held a low opinion of the King's leadership; Shuckburgh shared this view. He deplored Hussein's love of aviation, and thought his passion for flight distracted from monarchical duties (*Descent*, 21 September 1955, p. 278). Hussein reciprocated Glubb's contempt, and in July 1955 discussed with British officials the desirability of sacking him; see Hussein, p. 139. Lamb, p. 187, Satloff, p. 135 and Dann, *Radicalism*, p. 31 analyze the Glubb-Hussein quarrels in May and October 1955; Oren, "Winter" discusses their November 1955 clash.

¹²⁷ Although Iraqi leaders favoured Jordanian accession, they deplored Glubb's overly "rigid" attitude. (*Descent*, 22 November 1955, p. 303)

¹²⁸ M. Rose to UK Embassy Baghdad, 3 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/51.

unattainable, Templer had instructions to consult London for further guidance, although he should also “consider the possible usefulness of veiled threats that we might withdraw our support [for Jordan].” If these methods failed, his next objective was to get a signed private agreement in which Jordanian Ministers pledged accession. The final, and least desirable, option was to secure the Prime Minister’s signature on a “letter of intent,” whereby Jordanian leaders promised to join at some unspecified future point.¹²⁹ On the eve of Templer’s and Rose’s departure, Shuckburgh characterised their trip as a “great gamble,” and a few days later lamented he “could not see this going down very well with the Arabs.” His foreboding so apparent in November clearly remained.¹³⁰

Duke, after looking over the ‘official’ British package of an infantry brigade headquarters, two infantry battalions, re-equipment of one armoured regiment with Comet tanks, and a medium artillery regiment—significantly less than his recommendation—reacted pessimistically.¹³¹ He expressed dismay, lacking confidence that Templer could persuade Hussein and his Cabinet to accede, unless Britain “exercise[s]...considerable pressure.”¹³²

Other unfavourable trends also emerged. Although Macmillan did not inform Dulles of the magnitude and nature of Templer’s mission until events had acquired momentum, Dulles’ instincts alerted him to something in the wind. By late November he warned the National Security Council of his concern that Britain “was trying very hard...to regain its lost position with Arab states.” He feared a “significant Anglo-American cleavage on Near Eastern policy,” but recent developments suggested the likelihood of such an outcome. He warned his colleagues that British leaders displayed

¹²⁹ FO Memorandum, 3 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1051/61G.

¹³⁰ *Descent*, 2 & 5 December 1955, pp. 307-8 show Shuckburgh’s persistent confusion and hesitation. He balances his apprehension over Templer’s mission with a conclusion that “it is now or never” in Jordan.

¹³¹ C.A.E. Shuckburgh to H. Macmillan, 2 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/49G has package particulars, as does Eden, p. 343.

tendencies to “run away” with the Pact by “supporting [it] more strongly than perhaps was wise.” He thought Britain might “induce Arab states south of the [Northern Tier] to join [the Pact],” thus abandoning the Anglo-American moratorium for what Dulles perceived to be no good reason. He hoped for regional cooperation, but noted his unwillingness to “follow the British line blindly.”¹³³ He knew serious Western pressure—including initiation of Project *Gamma*—on Israel and Egypt to achieve a settlement was imminent, and feared British initiatives might compromise these efforts.¹³⁴

Britain confirmed Dulles’ suspicions when Macmillan sent a note to Washington on November 25th, announcing Foreign Office intentions to “do everything we can to induce Jordan to come in to the Pact. We may have to pay quite a price but we shall make an immediate effort to achieve this.”¹³⁵ A final notification came immediately prior to Templer’s departure, when Shuckburgh instructed Makins to inform Dulles of the upcoming mission, and suggested Washington “agree to make clear through [Ambassador Mallory] their support, [since] United States attitudes [are] likely to influence greatly the outcome of these negotiations.” Shuckburgh also wanted American officials to “indicate, however vaguely, that [Pact] membership is in [the] future likely to be the door to United States assistance in the Middle East.”¹³⁶ Shuckburgh, in other words, hoped to convince Dulles to pressure Jordan into accession by dangling American political and military aid as bait. Iraqi and Turkish leaders articulated a similar message to United States diplomats.¹³⁷

¹³² UK Embassy Amman to FO, 4 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/52.

¹³³ 267th NSC Meeting, 21 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 81.

¹³⁴ Caplan, pp. 196-99.

¹³⁵ *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 192 and *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 83 contain this cable.

¹³⁶ FO to UK Embassy Washington, 5 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115654 VJ1051/51G. Shuckburgh’s message to Makins reinforced Duke’s belief that “it would help considerably if...my American colleague could...support [Templer] strongly.” (Embassy Amman to FO, 4 December 1955; FO Minute, 5 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 V1073/1353)

¹³⁷ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 6 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1057/56.

When Dulles suggested “wait[ing] a little before trying to bring in Jordan... [since] an immediate move to expand the Pact would probably deny us Nasser’s cooperation,” British officials erupted.¹³⁸ Kirkpatrick thought Washington was six months behind the times, and deplored Dulles’ inability to recognise “dangerous Russian incursions in the Middle East.” Eden assessed United States attitudes as “poor.” Shuckburgh showed particular outrage, fuming that the American reply was “unsatisfactory at almost every point.”¹³⁹ That Dulles had “taken over a fortnight to reply” to Macmillan’s message (although in fact the interval was a little more than one week) also fuelled his anger.¹⁴⁰ Shuckburgh speculated that ongoing Western efforts to secure an Arab-Israeli settlement preoccupied Dulles, but for London, this rationale was unacceptable. British leaders could not consider any possibility of delaying on those grounds since “...Egyptian and Saudi action in Jordan threaten[s] *our whole position there*...leaving matters where they stand ha[s] become quite impossible.”¹⁴¹ Similarly, Macmillan now believed: “unless Britain strengthen[s] the Pact it w[ill] disintegrate.”¹⁴²

Here, in stark terms, lay a vivid illustration of disparate Anglo-American strategic priorities. Obtaining an Arab-Israeli settlement represented Dulles’ foremost Middle Eastern objective in Autumn 1955. In pursuit of this objective, the West “could waste [no] time” since peace might stabilise the area while minimising Soviet opportunities

¹³⁸ J.F. Dulles to H. Macmillan, 5 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 434 and PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/28.

¹³⁹ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum and I. Kirkpatrick Minute, 6 December 1955; A. Eden Minute, 7 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/28G.

¹⁴⁰ Although Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 134 accepts Shuckburgh’s ‘two week delay’ calculation, in actuality Macmillan’s message arrived in Washington at the end of the day on November 25th, and the State Department dispatched its response on December 5th, for a delay of ten days. Dulles vacationed at his Duck Island retreat from November 24th through 28th, across the American ‘Thanksgiving’ holiday. Thus, five working days elapsed from the time Dulles became aware of British policies to his response on the 5th—still an inexplicable break, although less egregious than Shuckburgh thought. He complained that it was “of course too late” for Britain to act on Dulles’ message (see *Descent*, 6 December 1955, p. 308), which may or may not be accurate. Templer had as yet conducted no negotiations with the Jordanian government, so perhaps a quiet recall still represented an option, although Shuckburgh had ruled it out.

¹⁴¹ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum, 6 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/28G (italics mine).

¹⁴² Memcon: H. Macmillan and J.F. Dulles, 15 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/2G.

there, such as repetitions of the ‘Czech’ arms deal. Continued conflict meant “further [Middle Eastern] deterioration.” Cold War considerations dominated his thoughts.¹⁴³

London, though also interested in this outcome, did not assess it as principal British goal—a term reserved for maintenance of the Hashemite-Gulf Arch. The United States wanted to keep Moscow *out*; Britain, preoccupied with access to Gulf oil, wanted to keep itself *in*. Although this difference is subtle, and did not always pose significant problems, as keeping Britain in and Russia out often functioned as two sides of the same coin, at times this strategic disparity represented a real flashpoint in the Atlantic partnership. Disagreements over Jordan quintessentially signified such alliance discord. Jordanian accession advanced fundamental British goals—buttressing its Arch—but undercut paramount American objectives: Egyptian cooperation in a durable settlement. Conversely, Jordanian neutrality assisted American ends while hindering achievement of British aims.

Since stakes in Jordan were of the highest magnitude, neither partner was amenable to compromise. Shuckburgh promised to “do our utmost to prevent Nasser taking offence,” but was unwilling to take measures that would do the most to keep Nasser in a cooperative mood—canceling Templer’s mission.¹⁴⁴ British devices for mollifying Cairo included the Aswan Dam project—a *quid pro quo* in which Nasser would swallow Pact expansion, and cease his anti-Hashemite activities in general, in return for Western financial assistance—and, as outlined above, Eden’s November Guildhall speech. American attitudes on these issues diverged from British perspectives. If an Aswan *quid pro quo* transpired, Washington hoped the *quo* would be Egyptian participation in *Alpha/Gamma*. Dulles doubted the West should play its ‘Aswan card’ too aggressively, since Cairo could always turn to Moscow for funding, and had recently

¹⁴³ Memcon: R. Makins and J.F. Dulles, 6 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 438.

given thinly-veiled warnings to that effect. Also, unlike Britain, which hoped to expedite Aswan arrangements by circumventing standard contractual procedures, American officials preferred competitive bidding, even if such arrangements took longer.¹⁴⁵

On balance, Shuckburgh's indignation at Dulles seems unjustified, as British officials had full knowledge of American reservations. By mid-November they knew incontrovertibly that Dulles opposed Jordanian entry unless Jordan's government and people made completely voluntary decisions to do so, and Amman made progress on settling its differences with Israel.¹⁴⁶ Shuckburgh apparently thought Dulles might change his mind if Britain unilaterally initiated efforts at forcible persuasion in Jordan, but neither he nor anyone else in the Foreign Office had defensible grounds for this misperception.

In addition to its efforts to neutralise any American opposition to Jordanian accession, Britain also observed potential danger in the form of Israeli resistance. Because Tel Aviv preferred its Arab adversaries to be divided, distracted, and weak,

¹⁴⁴ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum, 6 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/28G.

¹⁴⁵ PRO CAB 128 (55) 43rd Conclusions, 24 November 1955; H. Macmillan to A. Eden, 25 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 PM/55/172; *Descent*, 11, 28 & 29 November, pp. 300, 305-6; WCD, 29 November 1955. The Foreign Office intensified pressure on American officials to support Aswan financing precisely when Eden informed Ministers that Britain should pursue Pact expansion, outflanking Egyptian resistance if necessary (DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 21 October 1955; WAOH/I; Renwick, p. 142; Freiberger, p. 151). Britain's apparent expectation of an Aswan-Pact *quid pro quo* helps explain the "tremendous hullabaloo" in London when Nasser and Moscow seemed on the verge of consummating an Aswan deal, shortly before Templer departed for Amman. Eden took "a strong lead in...getting the World Bank and the U[nited] S[tates]...to put up quickly whatever is needed for Aswan," including dispatch of an anxious letter to Eisenhower (A. Eden to D. Eisenhower, 27 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 429; GH/HHOH). Soviet support, if it materialised, eliminated Britain's ability to placate anticipated Egyptian disappointment at Pact expansion. In many ways, rolling Aswan financing into this project conveniently fused Anglo-American objectives, since Aswan fitted into the context of broader efforts at settling Arab-Israeli differences, but obvious differences remained. DOS to US Embassy Paris, 15 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 458 outlines British interest in 'expedited' contractual arrangements; note that Makins' "strong demarche" along these lines transpired at the height of British efforts to secure Jordanian accession. 268th NSC Meeting, 1 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 432 illustrates Dulles' desire to use Aswan in exchange for Egyptian participation in *Alpha/Gamma*. See also Kyle, p. 108, Ashton, *Problem*, p. 69, Caplan, p. 286, and Dooley.

¹⁴⁶ See, in particular, notes 77 & 79 *supra*. Persson, p. 276, claims that Dulles' "representations [regarding Jordanian accession] were limited and not vigorously put forward," while Satloff, p. 123, adjudicates at least partial responsibility to Washington for the disasters resulting from Templer's mission, since

Israel had long sought to frustrate regional security coalitions, the Pact being no exception.¹⁴⁷ If, as Freiberger asserts, by late 1955 Eden perceived Israel as the primary obstacle to his designs for using the Pact in furtherance of British goals, bypassing Israeli mischief-making probably occupied a key place in his plans.¹⁴⁸ In any event, an Israeli ‘false move’ while Templer attempted Pact salesmanship could devastate any hope of success. Therefore, in their conversations with Israeli authorities, British diplomats dissembled, “discounting as nonsense” any notion that Templer’s visit portended any major shift in Jordanian political alignments.¹⁴⁹

These obfuscatory efforts apparently failed to win converts in Tel Aviv. Precisely at the moment when Templer’s efforts had reached their climax, and Jordan stood poised at the brink of possible accession, Ben-Gurion authorised Operation *Olive Leaves*. In this campaign, multiple IDF battalions stormed into Syrian territory near the Sea of Galilee (about five miles from Jordan), annihilating Arab positions there, and resulting in many Syrian deaths.¹⁵⁰ Morris asserts *Olive Leaves* represented yet another Israeli attempt to goad Nasser into hostilities, thus initiating the all-out war Tel Aviv so fervently sought.¹⁵¹ This explanation seems accurate but incomplete. As American and British diplomats noted, other factors spurring *Olive Leaves* probably included Ben-Gurion’s desire to expose recently-consummated ESS arrangements as a sham, thereby perhaps deterring

American officials did not support Templer adequately. Satloff perhaps misses the larger point that Dulles did not want Jordanian accession in the first place. See also Hahn, *Egypt*, p. 198, and Hobbs, p. 88.

¹⁴⁷ *Times*, 16 December 1955, p. 7.

¹⁴⁸ Freiberger, p. 130. Bar-On, p. 88 makes a similar argument.

¹⁴⁹ FO to UK Embassy Tel Aviv, 8 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1051/70. British diplomats also suggested to Israeli officials that Templer’s “visit was in no way...a counter move” to Amer’s trip to Amman.

¹⁵⁰ *Times*, 13 December 1955, p. 8. B. Morris, p. 294 says 48 Syrian soldiers and six civilians died. Bar-On, p. 57 puts the figure at 37 soldiers and 12 civilians, while Shlaim, p. 149 estimates that 50 Syrians fell dead, and Abba Eban (AOEH) suggests that Israeli troops killed 73 Syrians.

¹⁵¹ B. Morris, pp. 295, 381-83 summarises these operations, which took place the night of December 11th. Bar-On, Chapter Five, and Shlaim, pp. 149-155 are equally valuable.

other states from joining that alliance.¹⁵² Also, these raids added yet another liability to already-slim prospects for Jordanian membership in the Baghdad Pact, thereby weakening that organisation as well, commensurate with Israeli objectives.¹⁵³

Initially, however, Templer's mission appeared in London to represent a brilliant political triumph, in line with his initial expectations of success.¹⁵⁴ In fact, Britain's emissary actually faced a tough political battle from his first day in Amman. To read his dispatches is to witness a collision between British optimism and the hard realities of the post-imperial Middle East. Templer, highly confident of his persuasive abilities upon arrival in Amman, soon realised al-Mufti's Cabinet had its own ideas, and in many ways these conflicted with British designs.¹⁵⁵ Templer's dramatic opening statement to King Hussein and assembled Cabinet Ministers outlined a "Soviet plan to penetrate and subvert the Middle East... [which] has drastically changed the whole situation." Templer informed them that Jordan stood at "a moment of crisis... [and] a parting of the ways." Amman, therefore, "must declare its position now in no uncertain manner."¹⁵⁶ His vigorous effort to "put some stuffing" into Cabinet Ministers fell flat. Templer knew that "weak as water" Prime Minister al-Mufti represented the key to their decision, and feared the difficulty of "bringing [al-Mufti] to a sticking point."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² US Embassy Tel Aviv to DOS, 12 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 452; Memcon: F. Wilkins, R. Bailey, W. Morris, 13 December 1955, USNA RG 59 786E.00/12-1355. US Embassy Tel Aviv to DOS, 23 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 467 has additional American diplomatic analysis of *Olive Leaves*. Similarly to these analyses, Bar-On, p. 64 suggests that undercutting ESS credibility if Nasser did not respond to these raids probably figured in Israeli calculations. He also speculates that Ben-Gurion wanted to appease IDF hard-liners, who suffered disappointment when Israel failed to launch all-out strikes against Egypt following the 'Czech' arms deal. Shlaim, pp. 150, 155, who interprets *Olive Leaves* primarily as factional conflict between Ben-Gurion and Sharett, accepts that deflating ESS may have motivated this raid, but rejects Bar-On's 'appeasement' arguments.

¹⁵³ Neff, p. 176; Oren, "Winter."

¹⁵⁴ DOS Memorandum, 9 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 6. Oren, "Winter" discusses Templer's overconfidence.

¹⁵⁵ Satloff, pp. 118-19 illuminates political alignments and stratification within the Jordanian Cabinet during Templer's visit.

¹⁵⁶ "Report by Sir Gerald Templer, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., K.B.E, D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff, on His Visit to Jordan", Annexure 'C', 16 December 1955, PRO FO 371 115568 VJ1051/127G.

¹⁵⁷ G. Templer to FO, 7 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1051/68.

Templer's initial audience with the King proved moderately disappointing as well. Hussein showed some interest in British offers of increased political, economic, and military assistance, but also delivered a short, sharp, anti-Pact objurgation, remarking Iraq had "taken the Arab world by surprise [by] fail[ing] to prepare the ground" in the Middle East. Baghdad complicated this unfortunate situation by "do[ing] little since [forming the Pact] to win over public opinion." After condemning the Pact's very foundations, Hussein elaborated on the "danger" of immediate accession, since his government might "los[e] control of public opinion." He also favoured breaking Britain's command-and-control stranglehold in the Jordanian armed forces.¹⁵⁸ King Hussein clearly resented London's decision to send Templer as emissary, and his disillusionment grew as the British delegation's presence in Amman drove increasing instability across Jordan.¹⁵⁹ After these two meetings, Templer must have wondered what he had gotten into, although this inauspicious beginning in fact marked the pinnacle of his mission, since, as the days passed, prospects for British success dimmed steadily.

Day four of official negotiations (December 10th) represented a watershed for Templer's mission, and, had London exercised more foresight, probably marked the best point to initiate a 'loss-cutting' strategy whereby British envoys quietly scaled down—and perhaps abandoned entirely—the objectives of their quest. Templer grew "increasingly frustrated," particularly at al-Mufti, a "jelly...frightened of his own shadow." Templer expressed pessimism about the prospects of his foremost goal: Jordan making an official, public announcement of its intent to join immediately. However, he and Shuckburgh retained confidence that Templer could secure "some sort of assurance,

¹⁵⁸ G. Templer to FO, 7 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1051/69; Hussein, pp. 101, 109.

¹⁵⁹ Hussein's bitterness about British management and execution of the Templer initiative spilled over in the aftermath of his dismissal of Glubb the following spring; see UK Embassy Amman to FO, 4 March 1956, PRO FO 371/121492 VJ1051/50.

or letter of intent, out of [al-Mufti's Cabinet]," but this represented misguided optimism.¹⁶⁰

To restore British momentum, Templer proposed "pulling [the Cabinet] up with a jerk" by using "veiled threats...to bring them to the point" of Pact accession. Specifically, Templer outlined the necessity of telling Hussein and his Ministers London viewed Jordanian attitudes "very, very gravely and must as a result reconsider the whole position," an obvious reference to British political, financial, and military support of Jordan.¹⁶¹ Although the Foreign Office did not explicitly prohibit introducing intimidation tactics, officials in London recommended short-term moderation, including consultations with Hussein to see how far "veiled threats would help [the King] in handling his Ministers." If Templer did persist and employ threats, he should do so carefully, London suggested, remembering his objective of "putting some stuffing into [the Jordanian government]" rather than frightening them. In any event, the Foreign Office thought waiting a few days "before we take a stick to this camel" might be best.¹⁶²

Ominously, on December 10th and simultaneous with Templer's "increasing frustration" at al-Mufti, Glubb abruptly changed his tune regarding Jordan's internal situation. After blithely discounting any security threat within Jordan on numerous occasions, Glubb now warned Britain's Undersecretary of State for War of "considerable [Jordanian] opposition [to Pact accession]...serious rioting may result."¹⁶³ Precisely why Glubb wavered at this point is unclear, although a request from Jordanian Ministers on

¹⁶⁰ *Descent*, 10 December 1955, p. 310; Memcon: F. Wilkins, R. Bailey, W. Morris, 13 December 1955, USNA RG 59 786E.00/12-1355.

¹⁶¹ G. Templer to FO, 10 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115656 VJ1051/81G. See also *ibid.* (*Descent*) for Shuckburgh's discussion of Templer's request to use pressure. Shuckburgh apparently opposed such tactics, although Kirkpatrick seemed to sympathise with Templer, remarking "I don't trust these Arabs." Despite Macmillan's active involvement in Foreign Office strategy sessions regarding Templer's instructions, discerning his exact stance regarding the use of threats is difficult. Since he had ultimate responsibility for British tactics, and in the end Templer refrained from intimidation, Macmillan presumably opposed coercion at that particular time.

¹⁶² FO Minute, 10 December 1955, *ibid.*

December 10th for a lengthy period in which to consider their decision probably played at least some role in his vacillation.¹⁶⁴

Not only did British officials now have reason to fret about possible violence in Jordan, but in light of Washington's recent "luke-warm instructions" to the American Embassy in Jordan regarding the amount of support Ambassador Mallory should give to Templer's endeavour, London now realised Dulles' earlier guidelines remained in effect.¹⁶⁵ If anything, United States preoccupation with *Alpha* and *Gamma* had *increased* in the past week; while Templer was in Jordan, extensive Israeli border raids, culminating with *Olive Leaves*, sought to provoke Nasser into all-out war.¹⁶⁶ By craftily manipulating London's intense desire to monopolise Jordanian military aid, American authorities defused British pressure for unlimited United States support of Britain's Pact bid, thereby allowing the State Department to avoid any real role in Templer's mission and perhaps keep *Alpha* and *Gamma* on track. These officials suggested to British diplomats that only American *military* aid could have "substantial impact" in persuading Jordan to accede. Since, they claimed, United States leaders respected British prerogatives, no such assistance would be forthcoming. Surprisingly, this ploy worked.¹⁶⁷

Squandered Opportunities To Cut British Losses: Jordanian Riots in December 1955

Several key factors therefore militated against continuing the mission, but Britain persisted, despite escalating risks. After many long and agonising negotiations with Jordanian Ministers, Templer reported having "shot his bolt" and sought permission to

¹⁶³ J.B. Glubb to Undersecretary of State for War, 10 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115658 VJ1051/119.

¹⁶⁴ Satloff, p. 124.

¹⁶⁵ FO to UK Embassy Washington, 12 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115656 VJ1051/87; US Embassy Amman to DOS, 5 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 111. Ambassador Mallory characterised Washington's stance during the Templer mission as "impartial." E.G. Mathews to R. Bowie, 13 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 87 outlines Dulles' extreme trepidation regarding Jordanian accession.

¹⁶⁶ Caplan, p. 207; Seale, p. 254.

¹⁶⁷ DOS Memorandum, 9 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 6. At first, American officials suggested that the United States might extend Jordan "modest economic aid" to support Templer's mission, but

depart, since he had exhausted his panoply of arguments, “us[ing] every threat except the ultimate one—that if we do not get [a] satisfactory answer we might find it necessary to put our money on better friends.” Exactly one week after Templer’s arrival in Amman, Jordanian Cabinet divisions—in particular, al-Mufti’s dogged refusal to sanction Pact entry—caused the government to fall, when al-Mufti and four other Ministers resigned to protest British proposals.¹⁶⁸

Templer expressed contrition over his failure, but placed blame squarely on the Jordanian Cabinet, remarking “none of them has got any bottom.”¹⁶⁹ He was particularly incensed about the Prime Minister’s “spineless pusillanimity;” al-Mufti had clearly become Templer’s *bête noir*. Some blame also rested with the Palestinian Ministers’ “intransigent attitude,” although Templer privately marveled at their “unexpected guts.” In a revealing aside, he thought London’s decision to initiate this demarche “at too short notice and without adequate prior preparation” played at least some role in these disappointing results. Less than one week had elapsed between his selection as mission leader and his departure for Amman, and, among other failings, British officials had not provided Templer with a comprehensive brief as to various factions and personalities in the Jordanian Cabinet.¹⁷⁰

apparently retracted this offer. See UK Embassy Washington to FO, 6 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115655 VJ1057/56.

¹⁶⁸ US Embassy Amman to DOS, 14 & 15 December 1955, USNA RG 59 785.00/12-1455 & 785.00/1215-55; *Economist*, 17 December 1955, p. 1013; Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and G. Allen, 13 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 91. Interestingly, the *Times*, 14 December 1955, p. 8 predicted imminent Jordanian accession, even after *en masse* Palestinian resignations.

¹⁶⁹ G. Templer to FO, 13 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115657 VJ1051/95G. Eden, p. 344, also attributes Jordanian balkiness to a lack of courage regarding possible Egyptian hostility. Neither Templer nor Eden addressed the Pact’s *intrinsic* unpopularity, particularly among Palestinians in Jordan.

¹⁷⁰ “Templer Report,” 16 December 1955; Embassy Amman to DOS, 27 December 1955, USNA RG 59 785.00/12-2055; Trevelyan, p. 57.

His departure on December 14th provided another good opportunity for London to abandon, temporarily at least, its plan to push Jordan into the Pact.¹⁷¹ But, as had been the case on December 10th, the Foreign Office maintained pressure in Amman, despite the chaos engulfing Jordan's government. In this spirit, the Foreign Secretary sent decidedly premature congratulations to Templer, labeling his mission a "great triumph" since Macmillan thought Jordan's new Cabinet "firmly favour[s] our cause." He instructed Templer, as his last task in Amman, to convey to Hazza al-Majali British interest in immediate renewal of Pact accession negotiations. In the wake of Cabinet resignations, Hussein charged al-Majali with forming a new government.¹⁷² Dispatches from Duke revealed al-Majali planned to "bring Jordan into the Pact as soon as possible after taking office," so he was the perfect instrument for British ends. Duke asserted that "anything...to strengthen [al-Majali's] hand is certainly in our interest."¹⁷³ That al-Majali's hand needed strengthening became immediately obvious. Large and hostile demonstrations in Amman greeted his ascendancy on December 15th. Even before this ominous outbreak, Shuckburgh's nagging fears had resurfaced; he viewed al-Mufti's resignation, and al-Majali's political prospects, with concern, confiding to his diary that events in Amman had taken a less than ideal turn.¹⁷⁴

Two days after returning home, Templer suggested subsequent British moves in Jordan. His failure left him deeply disturbed and angry, apparently clouding his judgment.¹⁷⁵ He implored London to "apply the heat [by] taking a much stronger line"

¹⁷¹ Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 134 incorrectly states that Templer remained in Amman until December 18th; he actually left four days earlier.

¹⁷² FO to G. Templer, 14 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115657 VJ1051/96G; Persson, p. 278.

¹⁷³ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 14 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115657 VJ1051/102G. FJP, p. 169 contains additional information on al-Majali's background and political orientation.

¹⁷⁴ US Embassy Amman to DOS, 15 December 1955, USNA RG 59 785.00/12-1555; *Descent*, 14 December 1955, p. 311.

¹⁷⁵ Although Templer's level of sophistication regarding political complexities seemed unremarkable even in the absence of such frustrations; for instance, after an earlier Middle Eastern visit he concluded that Nuri

with the Jordanian government. In particular, Britain should unleash the “ultimate threat: putting our money on other friends [and] withdraw[ing] our support.”¹⁷⁶ While Templer submitted his conclusions, Glubb again vacillated regarding Jordan’s internal security, thereby committing yet another grievous miscalculation (although whether Glubb’s sources, or personal judgment, were at fault for his disastrous new forecast is unclear). The Arab Legion Commander abandoned earlier fears that violence loomed, informing London that Jordanian “feeling is not inflamed,” while discounting possibilities of “widespread disturbances.”¹⁷⁷ In fact, Jordan was only hours away from an all-out conflagration. Seditious public opinion fueled considerable unrest and disintegration; ferocious rioting began that night and lasted for two weeks. Political groups in the West Bank attempted to establish an independent Arab republic, and many residents of northern Jordan sought immediate political union with Syria.¹⁷⁸ When the dust settled, the Jordanian dead totaled many dozens, while hundreds or perhaps even thousands had suffered injuries.¹⁷⁹

Growing instability and violence in Jordan outraged the White House. Soon after rioting erupted, American anger circulated in Western media. While the State Department declined official comment, off the record statements underscored American disagreement

was the region’s only “man,” apparently ignoring the Iraqi leader’s narrow base of domestic support and other liabilities. (*Descent*, 13 June 1955, p. 260)

¹⁷⁶ “Templer Report,” 16 December 1955.

¹⁷⁷ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 16 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115639 VJ1015/40. If Glubb’s advice to Hussein was as dreadful as his suggestions to the Foreign Office, the King’s decision to cashier him three months later is hardly surprising.

¹⁷⁸ Memcon: G. Allen and A. M. Rifai, 28 January 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 18.

¹⁷⁹ US Embassy Amman to DOS, 18 December 1955, USNA RG 59 785.00 12-1855; JS-BD (Box 4 Book 1), 13 January 1956. *Economist*, 24 December 1955, p. 1110 discusses Jordan’s descent into anarchy. On the grounds that British pressure against Hussein led to significant political disadvantages, and “harden[ed] divisions in the Arab world,” this article strongly criticises Eden’s decision to send Templer to Amman. The piece also argues that heavy-handed British action in Jordan must have resulted from Whitehall’s perceptions of its own regional weakness. L. Tal, pp. 111-113, and Satloff, pp. 121-22 also have accounts of the Templer riots. *MEJ*, Volume X no. 3, p. 186 estimates that 41 Jordanians died and at least 150 suffered injuries; Neff, p. 177 also cites these figures.

“with...a British policy of putting pressure on Jordan to join the Pact.”¹⁸⁰ Eisenhower and his Cabinet felt British leaders ignored their advice, which for months had advocated strict limits on Pact membership. Jordan sat outside those acceptable constraints. American frustration boiled over at a December 22nd National Security Council meeting. Allen Dulles charged that Britain “ha[s] lately flex[ed] [its] muscles...creating certain problems for the United States...they tr[ied] to push Jordan into the Pact...[as Jordanian riots demonstrated], the results had been a failure.” This unrest inflicted a “severe blow to British, and to some extent Western, prestige.” He was angry that although British leaders had acted unilaterally—and against American advice—in aggressively courting Jordan, damage was not limited solely to British interests. In effect, this failure also tarred the United States, despite a minimal American role in Templer’s imbroglio. He concluded Britain must have taken such a desperate gamble to “restore something of their lost Middle Eastern prestige.” The Secretary of State was equally incensed over Jordan’s turmoil, noting his repeated suggestions that Macmillan avoid pressuring King Hussein and his Cabinet into Pact membership. Eisenhower labeled the British initiative “very unwise,” and incontrovertibly established Templer was no ‘loose cannon’ acting on his own agenda; London’s emissary “carr[ied] out the orders of his civilian superiors.” Vice President Richard Nixon wondered how London could conjure up “such stupid courses of action.”¹⁸¹ In Amman, United States diplomats articulated similar criticisms of British policy.¹⁸²

Like Glubb, and unlike American leaders, Ambassador Duke remained far too sanguine about possibilities for a favourable outcome in Jordan. Immediately before massive riots swept the country—and *after* some hostile demonstrations had already

¹⁸⁰ *NYT*, 20 December 1955, p. 1.

¹⁸¹ 271st NSC Meeting, 22 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 88. Additional American criticism appears in 289th NSC Meeting, 28 June 1956, DDE:NSC Box 8.

erupted—he predicted a “fair chance” al-Majali’s Cabinet would secure accession provided “it do[es] not delay too long.”¹⁸³ In actuality, this new government had no chance of carrying Jordan into the Pact, since Jordanian domestic opinion now stood squarely at odds with alliance membership. As Satloff observes, al-Majali’s quest was “doomed from the start.”¹⁸⁴ The more aggressively al-Majali tried to secure Jordanian accession, the stronger were popular backlashes against such a gambit. Duke, however, consistently failed to account for public mood as a factor in Jordanian politics. Also, al-Majali attached serious preconditions to his Pact support, backing Jordanian accession only if Glubb resigned his post, in favour of a Jordanian commander. Based on Eden’s later reaction to Glubb’s dismissal, acceptance of al-Majali’s conditions is a questionable proposition at best.

By initiating al-Majali’s futile attempt to revive Jordanian accession, Britain squandered yet another opportunity to retreat quietly from its aggressive posture. The combined effect of Templer’s, Glubb’s, and Duke’s fire-breathing suggestions apparently convinced the Foreign Office to continue with its hard-line policy. Shuckburgh expected King Hussein and al-Majali’s new government to “remain quite firm” in their support of Pact membership.¹⁸⁵ On December 17th, however, British diplomats reported Hussein had shifted away from accession because of his serious concerns about internal dissension. Despite the strong basis for Hussein’s fears—riots gripped the country, after all—Shuckburgh instructed Duke to “urge Hussein to keep Pact advantages in mind, and...steer [the King] away from a so-called compromise” outlining no immediate Jordanian accession. Al-Majali’s subsequent resignation failed to dissuade British leaders

¹⁸² US Embassy Amman to DOS, 27 December 1955, USNA RG 59 785.00/12-2755.

¹⁸³ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 16 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115639 VJ1015/40.

¹⁸⁴ Satloff, p. 120. Al-Majali apparently wrote of these events some years later (see Faddah, p. 315); evidently his account remains unpublished, and I cannot ascertain its whereabouts.

from this course, despite the fact that now *no* elected official remained to act as standard-bearer for the Pact initiative.¹⁸⁶

Only Hussein remained to shoulder this burden, and while Jordan burned, he again met with Duke. The King begged for “more time in which to prepare public opinion for Jordan’s adherence,” based on the “critical condition” of his country. Renewed efforts to drag Jordan into the Pact would probably only accelerate the cycle of violence, Hussein thought. Duke did not accept the King’s circumspection. He contended Hussein could contain the disturbances, but needed to employ “sufficiently firm” measures. Duke wanted the King to crush unrest by authorising Arab Legionnaires to fire directly into crowds of demonstrators, rather than merely over their heads as current Legion orders stipulated. Hussein and Duke also clashed over how to handle detention of Jordanians arrested for participating in the demonstrations, with Duke once again advocating draconian measures, in contrast to the King’s inclination to avoid mass incarceration of his subjects.¹⁸⁷ This disagreement later caused friction between Glubb and Hussein, as well.¹⁸⁸

As for a moratorium on Jordan’s accession, Duke rejected this option and stubbornly exhorted Hussein to keep pressing.¹⁸⁹ Duke also lectured other Jordanian

¹⁸⁵ *Descent*, 17 December 1955, p. 313. At this point, Shuckburgh was only a “little worried” about escalating Jordanian strife, but his stance soon changed.

¹⁸⁶ UK Embassy Amman to FO; FO to Amman, 17 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115657 VJ1051/110G. Al-Majali’s resignation triggered Hussein’s dissolution of the Jordanian Parliament on December 19th; Senate President Ibrahim Hashim formed a caretaker government on December 20th. Jordanian courts later overturned this dissolution.

¹⁸⁷ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 22 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115641 VJ1015/84. After riots erupted, some Legion units apparently operated under “shoot below the knees” guidelines; see Embassy Amman to DOS, 18 December 1955, USNA RG 59 785.00/12-1855.

¹⁸⁸ JS-BD (Box 4 Book 3), 6 March 1956.

¹⁸⁹ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 19 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115658 VJ1051/121. Remarkably, Podeh, *Quest*, p. 191 asserts that Jordan’s leaders ignored Jordanian and Palestinian public sensitivities. Dann, *Radicalism*, p. 28 maintains that following Hussein’s December 19th decision to forego accession, “the British adjusted with remarkable ease, as though they were glad to have an excuse for abandoning a course in which they no longer had faith.” Available evidence does not support these interpretations. Duke and the Foreign Office maintained their pressure on Hussein and other Jordanian leaders for at least four

officials on the desirability of an iron-fisted approach, urging them to give “forces of law and order firm instructions to...stop these disturbances.” In accordance with Duke’s recommendations, Arab Legionnaires shortly began firing into throngs of demonstrators in cities all across Jordan, including Bethlehem, Jericho, and Hebron, while British diplomats in other parts of the Middle East watched in horror.¹⁹⁰

British Consul in Jerusalem, T. Wikeley, also saw overwhelming force as the best remedy to Jordanian turmoil, requesting blanket “shoot to kill” authorisation for Arab Legion detachments in that city. In his estimation, the fundamental problem in Jerusalem was that “authorities...should have opened fire on the crowds earlier than they did.”¹⁹¹ Duke and Wikeley failed to realise their heavy-handed solutions to public relations were probably doomed, since the thought of loosing indiscriminate volleys into crowds of their countrymen revulsed Jordanian soldiers, who therefore refused to open fire, in open defiance of direct orders from their British officers.

The experience of one Colonel Bedford, commanding officer of a Legion detachment, provided a stark illustration of the disparity between British policy and Jordanian public opinion. Bedford ordered his subordinates to open fire with a machine gun on a crowd. The Jordanians refused, whereupon Bedford rushed to man the gun himself. Before he could pull the trigger, a group of soldiers and demonstrators killed the Colonel. Only if British officers played a direct, even preponderant role in quelling demonstrations did a harsh policy have any chance of success, but this ploy created an unfavourable impression among Jordan’s people and King, who thought such tactics

days after Hussein declared his intent not to join the Pact, blatantly dismissing Jordanian and Palestinian sensitivities. See also Neff, p. 178.

¹⁹⁰ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 19 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115640 VJ1015/51; JS-BD(Box 4 Book 1) 17 January 1956. Back in London, Members of Parliament showed similar alarm at British policy. On December 21st, Hugh Gaitskell asked “Would it not have been very much wiser to have found out, before Templer went out, what the reaction of the [Jordanian] population would be to his visit?” (*Hansard*, Vol. 547, p. 2031)

¹⁹¹ UK Consulate Jerusalem to FO, 19 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115640 VJ1015/52.

violated Legionary prerogatives. The Legion existed to defend against external threats, not serve as a police force for British privileges. Acting in that latter capacity fuelled Jordanian perceptions that “British ‘commanders’ of an Arab army slaughter[ed] the people in order to chain another Arab state to the imperialist chariot.”¹⁹² Increased possibilities for deadly mistakes represented another disadvantage to heavy-handed Legionary rules of engagement. A dramatic manifestation of this drawback emerged when a large crowd of Jordanian civil servants assembled in support of King Hussein and his government. Legionnaires, wrongly identifying this group as a hostile mob, opened fire, killing four and wounding several others.¹⁹³

On December 21st, as rioting and confusion neared a crescendo, Glubb panicked. He suggested Jordan “ha[d] just narrowly missed a revolution” in which a “leftish [*sic*] republic under Egyptian protection” seized power. Glubb requested prompt assistance in preventing Communist subversion and agitation, as well as technical advice on crowd control and street fighting tactics. Otherwise, Jordan might collapse, leading to “Communist or left-wing revolutions in Syria and Lebanon and later Iraq...the whole Arab bloc could go over to Russia.” Glubb recommended delaying any immediate renewal of British efforts to push Jordan into the Pact, so “[Jordanian] public opinion could reflect after the recent excitements.”¹⁹⁴

Although Jordan hovered on the brink of cataclysm, and despite Glubb’s most recent hysterical dispatches, the Foreign Office—with Eden’s full concurrence—decided to maintain its pressure.¹⁹⁵ London wanted bitter resistance against any move to “postpone...or delay too long” Jordan’s entry into the Pact, since British relations with

¹⁹² JS-BD (Box 4 Book 1), 15 January 1956; Dann, *Radicalism*, pp. 28, 32.

¹⁹³ US Embassy Amman to DOS, 20 December 1955, USNA RG 59 785.00/12-2055.

¹⁹⁴ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 21 December 1955, PRO FO 371/121462 VJ1015/3.

Jordan “are at a critical stage.”¹⁹⁶ London’s strategy should be to “spend the next few months trying to get a pro-Western government which will lead Jordan into the Pact,” British leaders thought.¹⁹⁷

A late-December Cabinet shuffle resulted in Selwyn Lloyd becoming Foreign Secretary. Macmillan’s departure from this post caused his “Machiavellian scheme” to collapse. British officials at last recognised the futility of their quixotic Pact project, and eased pressure for immediate accession; this decision, in combination with shrewd Parliamentary manoeuvring on Hussein’s part—which eventually backfired—brought a temporary lull to Jordan’s ordeal.¹⁹⁸ By year’s end, however, certain trends were clear. Instead of ending Iraqi isolation, pulling Jordan firmly back into the British orbit, and setting the stage for eventual Lebanese and Syrian Pact entry, Templer’s mission catalysed the strong, but hitherto repressed and muted, anti-Western undercurrents in Jordanian society.¹⁹⁹ Amman’s political alignment wavered dangerously between polarised elements—Hussein and his pro-Western confreres against radical Palestinian factions preferring ties with Nasser and Moscow—for many years thereafter, threatening Jordan’s very existence.

¹⁹⁵ Although Shuckburgh had become resigned to failure. The “mess” in Jordan left him “seriously depressed” and he was content to write off Jordanian membership, so long as Glubb “ke[pt] order.” (*Descent*, 19 December 1955, p. 313).

¹⁹⁶ UK Embassy Amman to FO, 22 December 1955; M. Rose Minute and A. Eden Minute, 23 December 1955; FO Minute, 24 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115659 VJ1015/130.

¹⁹⁷ G. Arthur Minute, 23 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115887 VR1076/520.

¹⁹⁸ Satloff, p. 128.

¹⁹⁹ DOS Paper O/PS/7, 19 April 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 26.

Chapter Four

Operation *Bonaparte*: British Assertiveness in Eastern Arabia

Collapse at Geneva

By early 1955, Muscat and the Trucial Sheikdoms possessed prime importance within Britain's Hashemite-Gulf Arch. The potential petroleum windfall they offered represented their predominant significance; for London, this proved an irresistible lure. British authorities cast anxious eyes on promising IPC explorations beneath sandy Eastern Arabian wastes; of particular value regarding Muscati oil was its position outside the Persian Gulf narrows.¹ This strategic commodity would reach the sea *beyond* Hormuz, thereby eliminating a chokepoint that could, in time of war or instability, interdict petroleum flowing to Britain and the Commonwealth. Of secondary importance to Britain was the status of Muscat and the Trucial Sheikdoms as components in Britain's network of Gulf clients. Whitehall had concluded that if *any* of this system's constituent parts fell away, the *entire* web would collapse.² This proposition, while of debatable accuracy, certainly shaped British Middle Eastern policies in the 1950s.

An ongoing British drive to contain Saudi Arabia constituted a corollary to London's insistence on the 'indivisibility' of its Gulf network. In a strategy very similar to that of the West in general during the Cold War—restraining Communist expansion all along the Soviet periphery—Britain sought to check Saudi power on the Arabian Peninsula.³ In many ways, this notion reflected remarkable consistency with earlier

¹ *Descent*, undated entry, p. 244. British planners had long recognised strategic advantages of Muscat's location outside the Hormuz narrows. FO Memorandum, 16 October 1952, PRO FO 371/98377 EA1084/259 discusses "our dream of a pipeline from [Omani] oil fields to the Indian Ocean clear of the Persian Gulf"; see also Ministry of Fuel and Power Memorandum, 5 May 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E6011; PRPG to FO, 27 September 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E12658; PRPG to FO, 14 April 1951, PRO FO 371/91262 EA1017/6; J. Morris, p. 26; Burrows, Annex I; Longrigg, p. 234.

² FO Memorandum, 14 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/30G discusses this theme.

³ This pattern emerges throughout contemporary British records; a vivid example is *Descent*, pp. 244-45. Here Shuckburgh advocates Anglo-Yemeni rapprochement in order to present Riyadh with a southern Arabian 'united front.' Consistent with this regional containment strategy, Shuckburgh thought, Britain should subordinate its differences with Yemen to the more important objective of preventing Saudi

British strategies on the European mainland. Balanced power, in Arabia as in Europe, represented Britain's desired outcome. In both cases, London promoted regional fragmentation to retain access. By denying outright hegemony to the dominant area power, Britain avoided potentially disastrous outcomes; in Arabia, constriction of regional oil exports constituted this possible catastrophe. Although British objectives on the Arabian Peninsula had for decades entailed containing and checking Riyadh, as Anglo-Saudi relations worsened following World War Two London pursued these objectives in increasingly overt fashion.⁴ A primary focus of this chapter is the theme that Anglo-American discord in the Arabian Peninsula had become nearly inevitable by 1955, as these two nations pursued fundamentally incompatible strategies there. Whereas Britain attempted to weaken and restrain Saudi Arabia, the United States sought to strengthen that kingdom because of its massive oil reserves, well-established political and diplomatic ties to the West, and strategic position at the crossroads of three continents. American authorities also thought punitive policies might assist Soviet efforts at Middle Eastern subversion.

In the first half of 1955, Britain exerted its containment strategy primarily through existing legal machinery. An Anglo-Saudi arbitration tribunal which materialised the previous summer offered Britain an opportunity to end long-running controversies regarding ownership of Buraimi. In January 1955, five arbitrators—British delegate Reader Bullard, Saudi delegate Yusuf Yassin, and three ‘neutrals’ from Cuba, Belgium, and Pakistan—convened an initial session. At these meetings in Nice, France, which dealt almost solely with procedural issues, Britain had two major objectives. Its first goal

hegemony. See also I. Kirkpatrick to UK Embassy Washington, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/331G and OME Memorandum, PRO CAB 134/1086 (55) 12, 12 May 1955.

⁴ Leatherwood, p. 18 traces this Arabian containment paradigm back to World War I.

entailed preventing the tribunal from setting up any ‘on-the-spot’ mechanism at Buraimi for monitoring violations of the arbitration agreement.⁵

The Foreign Office was particularly adamant on this point. Publicity regarding the lamentable conditions in zones where British clients ruled, in terms of poor inhabitant health and overall quality of living, could devastate perceptions of the value of British ‘protection,’ especially in comparison to noticeable prosperity at those parts of Buraimi under *de facto* Saudi control, such as Hamasa.⁶ A second and related point hinged on British interest in curtailing any visits to Buraimi by tribunal representatives during arbitration. The Foreign Office and Bullard agreed that Saudi bribery in disputed areas had proven much more effective than British bribery, thus imparting to Riyadh an upper hand in the Anglo-Saudi financial contest for tribal loyalties. This asymmetry of allegiances could very well persuade arbitrators to favour Saudi arguments.⁷ Bullard successfully lobbied tribunal chairman Charles De Visscher, and Ernesto Dihigo, the Cuban delegate, to support British positions on both issues. No arbitrators would go to Buraimi, nor would ‘on-the-spot’ agencies monitor events there. After working through some other minor procedural matters, the tribunal established its upcoming schedule: arbitrators would convene again in September, this time at Geneva, Switzerland. These meetings would provide arbitrators with their first opportunity to examine the formal, written case of each litigant. These cases—also known as ‘memorials’—served as primary evidence upon which arbitrators would base their decisions regarding Eastern Arabian boundaries, including control of Buraimi.

⁵ FO to UK Nice Delegation, 24 January 1955, PRO FO 371/114608 EA1081/6.

⁶ PRPG to FO, 10 July 1956, PRO FO 371/120589 EA1081/283.

⁷ UK Nice Delegation to FO, 24 January 1955, PRO FO 371/114608 EA1081/8. In Bullard’s memorable phrase, “...Saudi lies, being paid for at a much higher rate, would perhaps be more convincing than the Maskat [*sic*] and Abu Dhabi lies.”

Since Saudi and British memorial preparation was contingent on the outcome of Nice decisions, following those meetings both disputants engaged in intense activity. Assembling these memorials presented complex legal, political, and logistical challenges, incorporating a diverse collection of tax records, witness statements, analysis of political traditions, and other esoteric issues. Given these inherent difficulties, that both Saudi Arabia and Britain turned to their respective oil companies for assistance is unsurprising. ARAMCO provided the Saudi government with a stable of lawyers to examine mountains of material, establish relevance of various data, and build a case with the strongest possible odds of attaining legal victory. IPC continued its tradition of long and close cooperation with Whitehall by helping to overcome a significant obstacle, Item Four from the 1952 Standstill Agreement and related Arbitration Agreement clauses, which prohibited any Saudi or British officials from crossing disputed frontiers. The Foreign Office, recognising a need to accumulate evidence and identify alignments of local potentates and sheikhs for the purpose of building the strongest possible memorial, found an ingenious way to circumvent Standstill Agreement restrictions: IPC activities served as an ideal cover for covert intelligence operations across disputed frontiers.⁸ IPC planned to survey large coastal segments of Abu Dhabi; its employees, acting under official British direction, engaged in extensive evidence-gathering, while using their commercial connections to conceal their true activities.⁹ These efforts began in early March 1955 and continued throughout spring and early summer. IPC also expanded its financial support for the Sultan of Muscat to ensure his pro-British loyalties.¹⁰

⁸ Undated FO Memorandum, PRO FO 371/114609 EA1081/40; Wilkinson, *Frontiers*, p. 314.

⁹ FO to PRPG, 19 February 1955, PRO FO 371/114609 EA1081/32; PRPG to FO, 22 February 1955, PRO FO 371/114609 EA1081/34. Edward F. Henderson of IPC—an SAS veteran who had earlier worked for the Foreign Office—was the key British operative in this effort; p. 87 of his memoirs (op. cit.) describes various regional undercover activities. See also Thesiger, p. 275.

¹⁰ *Descent*, 27 July 1955, p. 273.

While preparations for the Geneva convention accelerated, British authorities suffered a brief panic when Bullard informed a European anthropologist of his intention to act strictly impartially while arbitrating boundary disputes. When word of this conversation got back to Persian Gulf Political Resident Burrows, he became extremely concerned British interests might suffer for lack of a forceful advocate at the Geneva deliberations. Shuckburgh assuaged Burrows' concern, assuring the Political Resident that Bullard, "so far from being 'impartial', is in fact splendidly partial."¹¹ Shuckburgh knew the strong advocacy Bullard displayed at Nice would continue unabated.

British incentives gained new urgency in July 1955, when IPC explorations located several promising geological structures in and near disputed territories, including one formation south of Buraimi that appeared to be a "tremendous oil field," accessible once drilling began later that year. The Foreign Office and the Ministry of Supply collaborated in providing several large aircraft, enabling IPC to airlift necessary gear and begin extracting oil.¹² These discoveries made it absolutely imperative that Britain secure undisputed control of Eastern Arabian disputed areas, to assure British domination of this new petroleum windfall. Since Whitehall had become resigned to long-term Saudi opposition, particularly "Anglo-phobe banditry," in the Arabian Peninsula, a clash appeared more and more likely as the summer unfolded.¹³

In August, various bizarre episodes occurred, apropos arbitration. One particularly strange—and important—incident involved Sheikh Zaid bin Sultan, brother of Sheikh Shakhbut, Ruler of Abu Dhabi. Burrows claimed a pro-Saudi local, a man named Qureishi, acted as King Saud's personal envoy in Buraimi, and offered Zaid millions of

¹¹ PRPG to FO, 20 March 1955; C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, 25 March 1955, PRO FO 371/114610 EA1081/64.

¹² PRO CAB 134/1086 OME (55) 10th Meeting, 27 July 1955, *Descent*, 27 July 1955, p. 273.

¹³ I. Kirkpatrick Memorandum, 17 June 1955, PRO FO 371/115514 V1073/879.

rupees to abandon his brother and defect to Saudi Arabia.¹⁴ This particular event spurred the Foreign Office to file official malpractice charges to the tribunal in late August. In addition to these allegations, British representatives also submitted complaints about Saudi bribery, unauthorised use of aircraft at Buraimi, efforts to send munitions into disputed areas, resistance to British distribution of relief supplies, and the size of the Saudi police detachment.¹⁵ London sought to secure judgments severely restricting the tempo of resupply into Buraimi, hoping to limit—and highlight—alleged Saudi transgressions. Another British objective was an official rebuke regarding Saudi financial malfeasance.¹⁶ In the event their delegation did not obtain censure of Saudi Arabia, British authorities planned to destroy Buraimi's runway in an effort to curtail Saudi access.¹⁷ Through Saudi arbitrator Yusuf Yassin, Riyadh filed its own complaints, such as British violations of Saudi logistical rights.

In addition to providing an opportunity for arbitrators to peruse Anglo-Saudi 'memorials,' the upcoming Geneva convention had now become a battleground for these swirling charges and countercharges. To support this expanded spectrum of activities, Britain considerably increased its legal contingent, adding, for instance, several Abu Dhabi sheikhs who testified before arbitrators about alleged Saudi infractions.

¹⁴ PRPG to FO, 9 August 1955, PRO FO 371/114645 EA1081/165; Bullard, p. 280. These allegations originated with Major J. Little of the Political Residency, although Little did not actually witness any meetings between Zaid and Qureishi. His source was apparently Zaid. British leaders publicised these allegations two months later; see *NYT*, 5 October 1955, p. 8. Mosely, *Dulles*, p. 349 weighs in with some extravagant allegations on this issue, similar to his claims regarding Turki's 1952 mission to Buraimi. Once again he fingers American operative Kim Roosevelt, claiming that Roosevelt "tried outright bribery, offering \$90 million in CIA-ARAMCO-Saudi gold if Zaid would repudiate his brother and cede Buraimi to King Saud." To support this assertion, Mosely cites his "conversations with Zaid's aides" (p. 513). Despite this clearly partial 'evidence,' Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 126 follows Mosely's lead. Brown, p. 209, repeats Mosely's allegations but does not comment on their accuracy. In considering these claims, Michael Weir's comments are worth recapitulating. In a personal interview, he noted that British officials "had not the slightest whiff" that American intelligence played any substantive role in Eastern Arabia, although Eveland, p. 155 states that by early 1956, some at Whitehall suspected a growing role for American covert activities there.

¹⁵ J.L. Simpson to C. De Visscher, 25 August 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/96.

¹⁶ Geneva Delegation to FO, 10 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/204.

¹⁷ FO Memorandum, 8 September 1955, *ibid*.

Significantly larger expenses resulting from this expansion temporarily threatened to overwhelm British financial resources, until IPC, with its deep pockets and strong vested interest in arbitration judgments, once again emerged as benefactor. Not only did the company cover all expenses—including those of the sheikhs and their attendants—but IPC also made available the *pro bono* services of one of its top lawyers, Robin Dunn.¹⁸ Once British delegates arrived in Geneva, Dunn shared lead advisory counsel responsibilities with Foreign Office boundary expert J.L. Simpson. Dunn was merely the latest IPC supplement to Britain's team; other company employees were already working full-time to build and fortify British arguments.¹⁹

Dunn proved a welcome addition to Britain's contingent, given the delicacy of British allegations. British delegates needed all the help they could get. For instance, British bribery charges against Saudi Arabia presented a significant challenge, since British and IPC officials had, in fact, distributed financial “presents” throughout Buraimi for years, both before and during arbitration. This largesse took various forms—motor vehicles, hard cash, and other blandishments—yet always focused on a single paramount objective: influencing loyalties of those living in and around Buraimi, thereby, perhaps, strengthening hitherto weak to non-existent Muscati and Abu Dhabi authority there. British officials carefully ‘laundered’ these ‘gifts’ by disbursing funds through complex back channels and local resource networks.²⁰

Simpson and his assistants cleverly distinguished between British activities and those of Saudi Arabia by maintaining that when British officials distributed “sums of money, [these] were in no case larger than custom required.” Saudi agents, by contrast,

¹⁸ FO Memorandum, 18 August 1955; A.H. Vergin Minute, 31 August 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/194. See also FO Memorandum, 2 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/197.

¹⁹ PRPG to FO, 10 July 1956, PRO FO 371/120589 EA1081/283. IPC's Henderson (see note 9 *supra*) toiled as a British team member for an entire year before Dunn joined the delegation in Geneva.

offered “very large sums of money.”²¹ Precisely where the threshold between “customary” and “very large” payments lay was, of course, an open semantic question, but resourceful legal parsing could perhaps demarcate this line in such a way that British distribution rested safely in the former category, while Saudi efforts fell in the latter. British authorities understood that making these arguments, and sustaining their allegations in general, was a difficult task indeed.²²

Dunn’s gratis assistance was potentially very helpful in overcoming these challenges, but a host of other problems threatened to place devastating obstacles in London’s path. Escalating turmoil among British delegates proved particularly damaging. This instability reached to the highest levels, in the form of a bitter quarrel between Simpson and Bullard. Their conflict had simmered for months, with Simpson making several recommendations for Bullard’s replacement, but strain at Geneva propelled this feud to new levels of intensity. Simpson became ever more shrill in his demands that Bullard be ousted, charging he had “no grasp at all of arbitral procedures, or of the issues in this arbitration.” Simpson also condemned Bullard’s “wholly unnecessary and ill-timed” questioning of witnesses during tribunal proceedings. His clumsy lines of inquiry left British delegates—and its lead advisory counsel in particular—“incandescent with rage.”²³

Britain’s arbitrator and Simpson certainly agreed on one issue: the desirability of Bullard attempting to influence his colleagues. However, Bullard and Simpson held very different opinions on optimal persuasive methods. Simpson advocated a discreet, behind-

²⁰ T. Rogers Minute, 9 April 1949, PRO FO 371/75018/E4046; L.A.C. Fry Memorandum, 4 June 1954, C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, 11 June 1954, PRO FO 371/109835 EA1081/305.

²¹ FO Brief for H. Shawcross, 31 August 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/238.

²² FO Memorandum, 2 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/197. See also Geneva Delegation to I. Samuel, 5 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/201, in which Simpson asserted that Saudi arguments would “win the day” at Geneva unless British delegates mounted extremely strong counter-efforts. In his view, defeat of Britain’s bribery allegations spelled “disaster” for the entire British case.

the-scenes effort whereby in quiet, unofficial conversations Bullard would repeatedly insinuate the correctness and superiority of British arguments. In particular, Simpson wanted Bullard to target Chairman De Visscher. For his part, Bullard favoured a more direct approach. He gave particular attention to Arbitrator Mohammed Hasan, going so far as to offer the Pakistani's son employment with a firm of chartered Oxford accountants. Bullard also attempted to arrange for Hasan a Foreign Office visit, presumably to give Whitehall an extended opportunity to win Hasan over. These tactical disagreements probably reflected, at least in part, their vastly divergent assessments of Hasan. Bullard was an old friend of Hasan, and during selection of the 'neutral' arbitrators, gave his highest possible endorsement of the Pakistani.²⁴ British officials accepted this suggestion, fully backing Hasan's nomination. When arbitrators met in Geneva, Bullard probably still thought Hasan's redemption was possible, despite rumours of his involvement with Saudi officials. Simpson, on the other hand, had apparently written Hasan off entirely, based on his recent spate of inexplicable behaviour, and wanted to focus efforts on those arbitrators who might be sympathetic to British arguments, or who, like De Visscher, had preponderant influence on his colleagues.

In addition to the Bullard-Simpson conflict, other problems dogged British efforts. Shakhbut proved singularly unhelpful regarding preparatory work, failing to satisfy even the most basic requests, such as supplying documents relevant to the British 'memorial.' His indifference sparked a dispute between Simpson and the Trucial Coast Political Agent.²⁵ In spite of these intra-delegation conflicts, three witnesses from Abu

²³ J.L. Simpson to I. Samuel, 12 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114620 EA1081/277 contains the most extensive record of the Simpson-Bullard feud.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, and undated R. Bullard Letter, *ibid.* This latter memorandum outlines Bullard's preliminary beliefs regarding the tribunal and its composition.

²⁵ Political Agency Trucial States to FO, 7 September 1955; J.L. Simpson Minute, 21 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/227. The Political Agency's accusatory tone angered Simpson, who thought its dispatch reflected hasty conclusions.

Dhabi took the stand on September 11th, testifying about Saudi malpractices for two days.²⁶ Of the multitudinous charges Britain leveled, the Foreign Office rated its bribery allegations as the most important, so British delegates made these affirmations the first order of tribunal business.²⁷ London publicised these charges soon thereafter.²⁸

Saudi delegates responded with favourable testimony of their own, the most significant of which was an appearance by Qureishi, the Saudi whom Britain charged with master-minding the attempted corruption of Sheikh Zaid.²⁹ Since this particular episode involved no physical evidence, and witness testimony stood in direct contradiction, arbitrators faced a difficult task in assessing the credibility of these opposing depositions. One aspect of this event that later caused significant controversy was a revelation Yusuf Yassin and Qureishi had met while in Geneva. British delegates alleged Yassin's rendezvous represented unacceptable collusion, and Chairman De Visscher expressed some concern about this matter.³⁰

Another fracas that erupted during these meetings concerned Hasan's late arrival. Although all other arbitrators had reached Geneva by September's first week, Hasan did not appear until September 11th.³¹ Hasan had recently visited Saudi Arabia, although his rationale for doing so caused controversy. In 1955, the *Hajj*, Islam's ritual pilgrimage to Mecca, occurred in mid-summer.³² Hasan, a Muslim, contended he was participating in

²⁶ UK Geneva Delegation to FO, 12 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/208. Lacey, p. 308, citing only Bullard's memoirs, describes the testimony of these three witnesses as "compelling."

²⁷ FO Memorandum, 8 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/204; FO Memorandum, 16 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/228. London assessed its bribery allegations as the *most important* regarding British strategies for neutralising Saudi 'self-determination' arguments. If British delegates convinced arbitrators that Saudi agents bribed Buraimi inhabitants, local testimony would count little, thus protecting a vulnerable aspect of Britain's overall position. Leveling bribery charges was a delicate operation, however, given similar British activities.

²⁸ See, for instance, *NYT*, 12 September 1955, p. 9.

²⁹ UK Geneva Delegation to FO, 14 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/215.

³⁰ PRO FO 371/114619 contains a full transcript.

³¹ "Breakdown of Buraimi Arbitration," *MEJ* Volume X no. 2 (1955) p. 61. Hasan defended his tardiness by contending that arbitrators had no clear-cut mandate attend tribunal *preliminaries*, which consisted mainly of administrative functions.

³² *Hajj* timing varies from year to year.

the *Hajj*. British authorities alleged Hasan was not on a religious pilgrimage, but vacationing in Riyadh, at Saudi expense. Britain also claimed a journalist had uncovered a conspiracy whereby Saudi Arabia agreed to lend Hasan money.³³ Both incidents are difficult to penetrate, and the ‘facts’ remain elusive.

Competing Anglo-Saudi testimony lasted for three days; on September 15th arbitrators withdrew to consider their ruling on conflicting British and Saudi charges (they were *not* preparing to announce an overall boundary verdict, but merely to rule on alleged violations of the arbitration agreement). On the eve of these private deliberations, officials in London exuded confidence. G. Fitzmaurice, foremost Arabian expert at the Foreign Office, assessed British legal positions as quite strong, and he hoped arbitrators would see their way to announcing a verdict, rather than falling apart over controversies surrounding such issues as Hasan’s behaviour, and contradictory witness testimony. Fitzmaurice predicted British allegations stood a good chance of gaining official sanction, which could in turn demolish any of Riyadh’s ‘self-determination’ arguments, as well as “do much to discredit the whole Saudi position.” On the basis of this optimism, British authorities implored their contingent to advocate the tribunal’s continued cohesion.³⁴

What looked rosy from afar appeared much bleaker at close range. British delegates viewed Britain’s prospects “gravely”, and forecast very discouraging results, including a prediction that arbitrators would rule for Saudi Arabia on most counts, such as issues of access to Buraimi, and British bribery charges. Their only area of confidence

³³ Mosely, *Dulles*, p. 349 accuses Kim Roosevelt of “trying to bribe arbitrators at the International Court [sic] in Geneva.” Although Mosely’s evidence for this claim is non-existent, Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 126, *Companion*, p. 48, and *Origins*, p. 154, and Ranelagh, p. 299, once again follow his dubious lead, alleging that American agents “tried to bribe arbitrators at Geneva.” Ovendale also seems to suggest—incorrectly—that at the point of Bullard’s resignation, arbitrators were considering a *boundary* verdict. In fact, for that particular phase of the arbitration, the tribunal limited its investigation to Anglo-Saudi charges and counter-charges regarding arbitration rules violations. Mosely and Ranelagh claim—incorrectly—that Saudi Arabia “lost its case” at Geneva.

³⁴ FO Memorandum, 14 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114617 EA1081/215A.

pertained to Qureishi; Simpson thought arbitrators might demand his ouster from disputed territories, including Buraimi.³⁵

As events demonstrated, Simpson's close vantage on tribunal activities proved a much more accurate viewpoint than distant perspectives from London. September 16th marked a major turning point in Eastern Arabian boundary controversies, and indeed, in subsequent events throughout the region. Arbitrators reached two major conclusions, both very injurious to Britain's case: a decision *against* British charges of Saudi bribery, gun-running, and transportation of contraband in disputed territories, and a decision *against* British proposals for restricting Saudi access to Buraimi. In fact, in this latter instance, arbitrators stipulated *expansion* of Saudi entrée.³⁶

But before the tribunal could announce these decisions, Simpson—who had learned of the verdict, probably from Bullard—alerted London, urgently requesting instructions. Shuckburgh and Fitzmaurice conferred, concluding such unfavourable decisions probably eliminated any chance of British victory. At best, failing to secure condemnation of alleged Saudi bribery undercut British regional preponderance, as all its Gulf clients would “hasten to make their peace with [Saudi Arabia].” Preventing such a ruling protected a key voussoir in Britain's Hashemite-Gulf Arch, so Simpson, Shuckburgh, and Fitzmaurice, after securing approval from Deputy Under Secretary at the Foreign Office Harold Caccia and Macmillan, jointly developed a mechanism for achieving this outcome: Bullard's immediate resignation on the grounds that

³⁵ UK Geneva Delegation to FO, 16 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/218. Although this dispatch arrived in London on the 16th, Simpson apparently composed it on the 15th.

³⁶ UK Geneva Delegation to FO, 16 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/220; Wilkinson, *Frontiers*, p. 323.

“uncontradicted evidence of malpractices against a member [probably a reference to Yassin] of the tribunal has...made it unfit to give decisions on bribery accusations.”³⁷

This statement of justification deserves further scrutiny, particularly in light of the tribunal’s legal mandate. According to its charter, any ‘findings’ necessarily reflected a *majority* ruling. Since the tribunal had five members, a single arbitrator’s malpractices did not, in themselves, necessarily prejudice an objective decision. Yusuf Yassin would most likely always vote in favour of his country; likewise with Bullard. Thus, decisions hung on ‘swing votes’ from the three arbitrators from ‘neutral’ countries. In this group, only Hasan ever faced suspicion for malfeasance, yet a *majority* of the tribunal still ruled against Britain on bribery *and* access issues. Had British delegates presented a compelling case, a favourable vote should have transpired *even in the event that Hasan was entirely beholden to Saudi Arabia*. Yet this did not happen. At least one (and possibly both) of the two ‘neutral’ and objective arbitrators assessed British evidence insufficient to prove their allegations of Saudi bribery and unauthorised access to Buraimi.

Based on this episode, perhaps British arbitration strategy was to accept tribunal jurisdiction only if that body found for Britain. By offering ‘best of both worlds’ possibilities, such tactics, if Britain actually employed them, were clever. A favourable arbitration would end these troublesome boundary disputes on terms acceptable to Britain. Since the Foreign Office initially thought this outcome was at least possible, committing to a judicial process made sense for London. An unfavourable ruling was impossible—if the outcome looked bad, British delegates or arbitrators would resign, leaving Britain no worse off than before agreeing to arbitration. In the last resort, Britain

³⁷ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum and H. Caccia minute, 16 September 1955 (italics mine); H. Macmillan minute, 17 September 1955; PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/228.

could always declare unilateral frontiers, as Eden had so strongly considered in early 1953.³⁸

A memorandum Shuckburgh sent to Caccia immediately after Bullard's departure seems at least in part to substantiate this theory; Shuckburgh noted with satisfaction that the resignation "has *effectively prevented the tribunal from announcing decisions which would have been unacceptable to us.*" He also expressed his pleasure that not even Saudi delegates suspected Bullard's renunciation owed "to our apprehension of an unacceptable verdict."³⁹ On a later occasion, Shuckburgh explained British behaviour by emphasising his conviction that "no other way existed [for] prevent[ing] Saudi [Arabia]...from eventually absorbing the Trucial Sheikdoms and Muscat."⁴⁰

In any event, Bullard resigned the afternoon of September 16th, justifying his actions by stating Yusuf Yassin had been an advocate of Saudi claims rather than a truly objective arbitrator.⁴¹ Bullard's primary public complaint highlighted contact between Yassin and Saudi witness Qureishi.⁴² In keeping with Foreign Office instructions, Bullard presented his decision as an entirely personal one and in no way under official British

³⁸ As British officials had been aware for years (see, for example, FO Memorandum, 8 December 1951, PRO FO 371/91292 EA1088/2), inclusion of Saudi and British nationals as arbitrators was a fatal flaw since it allowed partisan machinations and intrigue. Fitzmaurice analysed various aspects of this issue in his September 14th memorandum (PRO FO371/114617 EA1081/215A). Riyadh may have had a similar strategy—accepting only favourable arbitration outcomes—but ascertaining as much is difficult, since arbitrators ruled for Saudi Arabia.

³⁹ C.A.E. Shuckburgh to H. Caccia, 17 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/230. See also PRO CAB 134/1086 OME (55) 11th Meeting, 21 September 1955. Wilkinson, *Frontiers*, p. xxi presents a variant of this theory, remarking that "Britain knew its legal cards would be trumped, and had no alternative but to abandon the game or answer by imposing a frontier line. Unilateral declaration of frontier lines preserved a far larger chunk of territory under British control than would have resulted through negotiations or arbitration."

⁴⁰ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum, 14 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/30G.

⁴¹ *Economist*, 24 September 1955, p. 1040 has an interesting, though hardly objective, account of tribunal dissolution. See also Lenczowski, pp. 145-47.

⁴² J. L. Simpson Memorandum, 16 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114620 EA1081/256. See also Melamid.

direction.⁴³ De Visscher immediately placed the tribunal into indefinite suspension, pending Bullard's replacement.

Establishing Military Solutions

After instructing Bullard to abjure his position as arbitrator, the Foreign Office needed to establish British policies regarding arbitration. Eastern Department officials soon considered possible courses of action. Initial sentiment favored alteration—although not complete rejection—of arbitration. Some common suggestions for modification were Yusuf Yassin's removal, or a recomposed tribunal with an entirely new membership.⁴⁴ By September 20th, however, Foreign Office attitudes were clearly in transition. Eastern Department Head Ian Samuel suggested denunciation of arbitration on grounds that Yusuf Yassin's “bribery and misconduct” showed Saudi Arabia would always cheat in legal proceedings.⁴⁵ Shuckburgh, who characterised the Saudis as “crooks of the deepest dye,” reached similar conclusions and even considered “methods of straight force.”⁴⁶

Those favouring outright denunciation and possible military action initially met tangible, though scattered, opposition. British diplomats in Jeddah, for instance, marshaled several strong arguments for continuing arbitration in some altered fashion. Consul Horace Phillips warned denunciation might actually strengthen Saudi regional

⁴³ Despite the fact that instructions to resign had, in reality, come from the Foreign Office, as outlined in Shuckburgh's September 16th memorandum (PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/228). A bizarre postscript to this episode is in a subsequent minute to Shuckburgh's memorandum, which one 'ARW' of the Foreign Office added in January 1962—seven years after arbitration had ended—alleging that Bullard's resignation occurred entirely at his own behest, with no Foreign Office involvement or influence. 'ARW' based this minute—which directly contradicts Shuckburgh's memorandum—on a 1961 conversation with Bullard. The account in Bullard's memoirs is notable primarily for its brevity; when “it became clear that I must cease to have anything to do with the arbitration, I resigned.” (Bullard, p. 280). Bullard does not directly address any issues regarding Foreign Office involvement in his decision.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Shuckburgh's instructions to British delegates, 16 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/228, in which he clarified that Bullard's resignation statement should *not* denounce the tribunal's authority or legitimacy. C.A.E. Shuckburgh to H. Caccia, 17 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/230 reaffirmed his support for maintaining arbitration.

⁴⁵ FO to PRPG, 20 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/232. By late September, Samuel irrevocably opposed continuation of legal machinery.

⁴⁶ PRO CAB 134/1086 OME (55) 11th Meeting, 21 September 1955, and Shuckburgh's diary entry of the same day (p. 278) are the earliest documented suggestions proposing a forcible solution at Buraimi.

positions, by giving Riyadh an excuse to reinforce its posts along disputed frontiers. He also predicted widespread violence, and feared “renewed [American] pressure for a settlement...and even less [American] cooperation in our stand against Saudi Arabia.” Finally, he anticipated major Saudi propaganda efforts, in which Riyadh could contrast British belligerence with its own earnest desire for an amicable resolution. For all these reasons, he preferred to continue arbitration, although he admitted denunciation might be acceptable if the Foreign Office concluded such a policy generated “overwhelming [British] advantages,” and offset “continued...damage to U[nited] K[ingdom] interests.”⁴⁷

J. Peck, Britain’s Middle East Foreign Officer stationed at Nicosia, Cyprus, also opposed direct military intervention, although he, like Phillips, acknowledged “arrest[ing] [the] expansion of Saudi influence...[is] a major British interest throughout the Middle East,” and feared imminent Saudi moves to consolidate and expand its Eastern Arabian influence. Peck reconciled his disparate assertions by suggesting Sultan Said shoulder the burden of military intervention, with Britain limiting its assistance to logistical support and “other methods of induc[ing]” Said to execute military measures, although he thought this type of solution should serve strictly as a last resort. He suggested British positions would be far stronger if London stayed within the confines of formal legal processes, such as an appeal to the International Court.⁴⁸

As September ended, the Phillips-Peck ‘status quo’ faction fell rapidly from favour. Several factors explain their eclipse. Perhaps the most important hinged on a growing feeling in Whitehall that any future legal verdict—whether via arbitration, or some other jurisprudential body—would probably favour Saudi Arabia. IPC lawyer Robin Dunn weighed the merits of Saudi and British arguments, concluding that although

⁴⁷ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 22 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/233.

both sides had made a strong case for an award in their favour, in certain crucial regions, particularly inland areas, "...evidence of Saudi sovereignty appears to be stronger than that of [British clients]." Of particular concern to Dunn were Saudi political and historical arguments, which he expected to exert a strong influence on arbitrators.⁴⁹

At the Foreign Office, Fitzmaurice's sentiments bordered on outright panic. He rated possibilities for a Saudi legal victory as "very considerable," and thought this outcome might generate "very serious criticism" of his department. He therefore expressed "serious concern" about continuing arbitration in any form, and advocated complete abandonment of this mechanism in light of the "clearest possible warnings" emanating from arbitrators before, during, and after their short deliberation, regarding strengths and weaknesses of respective Anglo-Saudi arguments.⁵⁰ His status and expertise almost certainly provided these remarks with much clout in ongoing Foreign Office debates.

Probably only Ian Samuel exerted more influence on Saudi policy than Fitzmaurice, and his recommendations exceeded those of Fitzmaurice. Samuel had been an early proponent of outright denunciation, and a series of late September memoranda amplified and expanded his initial stance.⁵¹ He also established broader perspectives for long-term consequences regarding Eastern Arabian events, concluding Britain "could not continue...arbitration without courting disaster" on two separate fronts. The first component of this potential disaster was the paramount significance of the outcome. Had nothing important been at stake, Britain could afford carelessness or apathy, but this was

⁴⁸ UK Legation Nicosia to FO, 27 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114620 EA1081/260.

⁴⁹ FO Memorandum: "Legal Opinion of Robin Dunn on the Two Memorials," 28 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114620 EA1081/268.

⁵⁰ G. Fitzmaurice Memorandum, 28 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/314G.

⁵¹ One of Samuel's first strong statements favoring denunciation was his memorandum to C.A.E. Shuckburgh, 24 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/280, suggesting outright denunciation as less injurious to British Persian Gulf interests than the ambiguity of sticking with a disrupted arbitration process.

not the case. Since Buraimi stood astride crucial regional crossroads, thus providing a convenient avenue for additional Saudi political expansion toward the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, this oasis comprised the “political and strategic key to the whole of southeastern Arabia,” with its potentially huge oil deposits under IPC control. Under no circumstances could Buraimi slip from British domination. The result would be a complete collapse of British positions in the Arabian Peninsula and perhaps the entire Middle East, rendering long-standing strategic points untenable.⁵² The second component of Samuel’s looming disaster was a risk that British inaction might allow Saudi Arabia to gain Eastern Arabian hegemony, thus breaking British containment. As he saw it, the greater the probability of Saudi Arabia stepping into the void and establishing control there, the more pressing was Britain’s need to move quickly and aggressively. In his estimation, probabilities for Saudi assertiveness were very high. The combined weight of these two aspects overwhelmed any disadvantages of military action, including possible American disapproval, or a resurgence of “anti-colonial bias” within the Commonwealth.

I.T.M. Pink, Assistant Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, thought such recommendations would “almost certainly land us in trouble of one sort or another,” but this did not alter his unqualified approval of Samuel’s plan, on grounds that immediate action garnered for Britain strong positions. Stalling tactics only strengthened Saudi regional footholds.⁵³

De Visscher’s September 24th resignation also contributed to eclipse of the ‘status quo’ faction.⁵⁴ With the Belgian Chairman gone, any hope of a rapid resolution disappeared. Exactly why he resigned is unclear, although his action later caused Foreign

⁵² I. Samuel Memorandum, 30 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/305, which is probably the most significant document in terms of establishing British Arabian policies in late 1955. Kelly, “Dispute” also analyses Buraimi’s strategic import.

⁵³ I.T.M. Pink Minute, 30 September 1955, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ FO Memorandum, 24 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114620 EA1081/254.

Office difficulties. Apparently, he and Bullard had struck a bargain whereby he agreed to resign if British officials subsequently announced details of Hasan's Saudi liaisons. Bullard entered this deal without Whitehall's sanction, which did not want to carry it through, fearing negative ramifications for Anglo-Pakistani relations. British resistance made Bullard very upset.⁵⁵

A few days after this controversy erupted, a Foreign Office public statement expanded on the reasons for Bullard's resignation; this may have been an attempt to mollify Bullard. Among other things, this declaration charged Yusuf Yassin with acting partially while arbitrating, rather than discharging his duties in an objective manner.⁵⁶ While Yassin was undoubtedly subjective—he openly admitted he kept Saudi interests in mind while 'arbitrating'—for Britain to make a major issue of this partisanship was rather specious, since the Foreign Office was not averse to using Bullard as a stalking-horse for its interests.

As London tilted toward military force, Shuckburgh met in Washington with State Department officials and attempted to fathom their attitudes. Moreover, he intended to impress upon them the severity of alleged Saudi misbehaviour at Geneva, while describing British dispositions regarding the future of Arabian boundary disputes.⁵⁷ In conversations with Fraser Wilkins, Director of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, Shuckburgh was moderately forthright in outlining Foreign Office perspectives; he suggested British authorities opposed additional arbitration because of their concerns

⁵⁵ R. Bullard to FO, 26 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/312.

⁵⁶ FO Press Release, 4 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114628 EA1081/490. See also Editorial Note, 4 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII*, no. 179.

⁵⁷ I. Samuel to C.A.E. Shuckburgh, 24 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/280. This memorandum provided Shuckburgh with instructions regarding how he should conduct conversations in Washington.

over receiving a “fair hearing,” and instead favoured a policy which allowed existing Anglo-Saudi agreements to lapse.⁵⁸

Wilkins proved extremely reticent during these talks, scotching Shuckburgh’s attempt to plumb State Department attitudes regarding Eastern Arabian destinies. He merely thanked his British counterpart for updating him on arbitration progress, and refrained from any significant recommendations or commentary. Although Shuckburgh did discuss the possibility of unilateral boundary declaration, it is important to note he did not mention military action in any form.⁵⁹ Several weeks later, after Washington complained bitterly about a lack of consultation in the wake of British military operations along disputed Eastern Arabian frontiers, British authorities claimed Shuckburgh’s monologue had been sufficient warning to the United States. The record does not support this suggestion.

Like Shuckburgh, Foreign Office legal experts and Burrows favoured using force. Burrows suggested “well planned, swiftly executed...and immediate military occupation of [Buraimi] and strategic points in [the] western disputed area” as well as an attack on the Saudi airstrip near Buraimi.⁶⁰ London’s first major decision in this regard occurred in early October. Whitehall concluded arbitration was no longer in its interest, as this process now directly threatened British control of Buraimi; Caccia strongly recommended abandonment since any other policy was “morally wrong and politically foolish.” He recognised that quitting arbitration entailed certain significant consequences, such as an almost inevitable use of force to assert British regional prerogatives. Another vexing consequence of unilateral denunciation would be the inevitable ramifications in

⁵⁸ Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and F. Wilkins, 29 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/286G.

⁵⁹ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, 1 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/286/G/A has definitive evidence that Shuckburgh did *not* discuss military operations with Wilkins.

⁶⁰ PRPG to FO, 24 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/235. W. Gault, a consistent advocate of strong measures in disputed areas, composed this message.

Washington. Caccia knew the United States faced an “awkward moment” in Saudi Arabia because of ongoing American efforts to dissuade King Saud from following the Egyptian lead by purchasing Soviet bloc weaponry. However, none of those adverse possibilities proved significant enough to compel British authorities to reconsider their belief that “arbitration is finished.”⁶¹

Whitehall’s second major decision—which flowed naturally from the first: denouncing arbitration—was its conclusion that Britain and its Gulf clients needed to employ military power against Saudi Arabia. Denunciation alone was entirely inadequate. Although final Foreign Office decisions for using force did not appear until mid-October, this option received serious consideration well before the ultimate selection of a military solution. In late September, the Foreign Office alerted the Ministry of Defence that use of military force had become a strong possibility, and asked the Chiefs of Staff to prepare for imminent reoccupation of Buraimi and “elimination of Saudi Arabia’s police detachment at the oasis.” Eastern Department authorities also requested development of adequate military measures for repelling any subsequent Saudi incursions across disputed frontiers.⁶²

A few days later, British diplomats at Muscat assisted by outlining requirements, as well as the probabilities of success, for various military operations in and around Buraimi. They reported redeployment of three squadrons (approximately 300 men) of Trucial Levies could rather easily accomplish primary British objectives: ejecting all Saudis from Buraimi, and capturing and extraditing to Muscat those sheikhs whom Sultan Said accused of “high treason”: Rashid bin Hamad and Saqr al-Naimi. Such manoeuvres required minimal external assistance, primarily logistical support

⁶¹ H. Caccia to C.A.E Shuckburgh, 1 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/286/G/A.

⁶² FO Memorandum to Colonel H.G. Croly, COS Secretariat, MOD, 26 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114620 EA1081/252.

(communications equipment, and recurring shipments of large quantities of petroleum). IPC, with its significant transportation capacity, would provide conveyance for these Levy squadrons. This assumption that regional forces could handle a military operation without significant material support from London only held if Saudi Arabia did not launch an armed intervention of its own, these diplomats warned. In the event of Saudi counterattacks, Britain needed to provide large reinforcements to buttress the relatively weak Muscati military posture.⁶³ Beyond Samuel's throwaway comment that pacific solutions might "postpone or avoid an international row," by early October no meaningful counterarguments against using force remained. Eastern Department officials held strong feelings that a military campaign might touch off full-scale Anglo-Saudi war, but momentum favouring force now overwhelmed these qualms.⁶⁴

The biggest practical dilemma regarding proposed British operations at Buraimi was the presence of a fifteen-member Saudi police detachment near al-Ain, a centrally-located village. The Foreign Office favoured complete expulsion of this group, but faced the problem of how to "scupper the Saudis without seeming to be very dirty dogs indeed," since these men enjoyed full legal protection through an international agreement, and would probably resist British efforts to evict them. Shuckburgh knew, therefore, the "delicacy" of displacement: if "some of them got shot it would not look good." The possibility of casualties on both sides was very real. The Foreign Office also faced the vicissitudes of military fortune. Initial British attacks might fail, enabling Saudi policemen to find sanctuary and organise resistance, reproducing the dreadful blockade

⁶³ PAM to FO, 30 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114620 EA1081/265. According to this dispatch, if Saudi Arabia counterattacked, Sultan Said could only muster one infantry company in response, primarily because of his ongoing campaign to establish control over Oman.

⁶⁴ I. Samuel Memorandum, 30 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/305. Samuel did not think that "avoiding an international row" offset the advantages of using force, but he did suggest military action might start an all-out regional war. See his comments at COS Meeting 55(260), 17 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/313G.

conditions of 1952-54. British authorities feared hostilities might degenerate into siege warfare, with Trucial Levies bogged down in a lengthy attempt to reduce the Saudi police camp. Gaining complete surprise, thereby minimising casualties and avoiding protracted struggle, presented an obvious solution, although this too had drawbacks. The Foreign Office acknowledged attacking Saudi policemen “without warning...[when] they are in Buraimi in good faith would put us seriously in the wrong.”⁶⁵

Burrows offered a way out of this dilemma by suggesting a compromise: surprise *encirclement* of Saudi positions, an operation well within Trucial Levy capabilities. Such an approach “minimise[d]...risks of armed [Saudi] resistance.” If all went according to Burrows’ plan, this surprise assault would shock Saudi policemen and their allies into immediate surrender. If not, British forces could secure their capitulation by interdicting supplies, a particular Saudi vulnerability since al-Ain lacked any indigenous water supply.⁶⁶ The Foreign Office had real misgivings about prospects for a quick Saudi surrender, which meant British operations might well settle into a formal siege of unknowable duration. Burrows’ cautious ‘halfway’ plan therefore did not meet British requirements; he needed to prepare more aggressive alternatives. A quick resolution ranked above protracted fighting, he learned from his superiors in London, even if expediency involved significantly more casualties than patience.⁶⁷ Burrows therefore formulated a new and bolder plan, exploiting enemy vulnerabilities such as poor defensive terrain. In any event, Saudi policemen rarely bothered to guard their camp, which amplified these weaknesses.

⁶⁵ *Descent*, 7 October 1955, p. 289; FO to PRPG, 7 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/235.

⁶⁶ PRPG to FO, 8 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/288.

⁶⁷ FO to PRPG, 11 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/288A illustrates that although the Foreign Office reserved ‘veto authority’ for itself, overall operational responsibility and planning rested with Burrows.

An additional problem with proposed British military operations involved future boundary configurations. British officials planned to declare unilateral frontiers, but faced the difficult and complex question of precisely where this delineation would lay. The Riyadh Line emerged as a leading candidate. Although Saudi Arabia had never accepted this demarcation, it commanded strong British support by providing commercial interests such as IPC subsidiaries Petroleum Concessions and Petroleum Development Oman, Limited with their greatest possible opportunities for oil exploration and exploitation.⁶⁸ To this end, Eastern Department officials held extensive discussions with IPC executives for the purpose of establishing a line maximising, within existing political constraints, entrepreneurial success and profitability.⁶⁹ The Chiefs of Staff also favoured a certain firmness of attitude in frontier declarations, although for somewhat different reasons, concluding any boundary concessions could stigmatise Britain in the Middle East as weak and disloyal.⁷⁰ But British officials also had to consider the military and public relations ramifications of imposing a harsh, one-sided settlement on Saudi Arabia.

The risk that Saudi Arabia might charge London with armed aggression, and haul Britain before the United Nations Security Council, posed a final significant problem.⁷¹ The Foreign Office thought the probability of a Saudi appeal in New York remained extremely low so long as Britain limited its actions to denouncing arbitration. But military action raised this risk considerably.⁷² However, Eastern Department officials had confidence Saudi appeals would prove ineffective, since Britain could “stall indefinitely while remaining in possession of [disputed] ground.” American assistance held particular

⁶⁸ Burrows, p. 94.

⁶⁹ I. Samuel Memoranda, 14 October 1955 (PRO FO 371/114625 EA1081/391) and 20 October 1955 (PRO FO 371/114625 EA1081/408).

⁷⁰ COS Meeting 55(260), 17 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/313G.

⁷¹ PRO CAB 134/1086 OME (55) 11th Meeting, 21 September 1955. How times had changed since Gladwyn Jebb suggested in early 1953 that “recourse to United Nations procedures to deal with Saudi claims on Trucial Sheikhdom territories might, one day, be in our own interest.” (BDEEP:CG&EE I no. 103)

importance for Britain if Riyadh appealed, although many British authorities, including Eden, assessed the drawbacks of a pre-emptive warning to Washington as outweighing any potential benefits.⁷³

Inclusion of standing operational orders stipulating seizure of all Saudi papers, property, and effects in disputed areas represented an additional component of British strategy to dissuade Riyadh from appealing in New York. The Foreign Office hoped such confiscatory measures might find incriminating evidence regarding Saudi behaviour before and during arbitration. Such material was potentially embarrassing to Saudi Arabia, and could thus generate leverage for extracting a secret *quid pro quo* from Riyadh: Britain would keep the material secret if Saudi Arabia desisted from a Security Council appeal. This ploy was far from foolproof, however, since London had no guarantee military occupation of Buraimi might unearth such evidence (or even that such evidence actually existed).⁷⁴

Operation Bonaparte: Implementing Military Operations in Eastern Arabia

The wide-ranging debate over the extent and importance of British interests in the Arabian Peninsula, the optimal methods for securing those interests, and the best options for overcoming challenges associated with military operations, lasted for three weeks. By the second week in October, those who influenced Arabian policy at the Foreign Office—Macmillan, Kirkpatrick, Caccia, Pink, Samuel, Shuckburgh, and Fitzmaurice—concluded unanimously that force had become their only real option. Consistent with previous and future British assessments regarding Middle Eastern strategy, Persian Gulf oil constituted

⁷² G. Fitzmaurice Memorandum, 28 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/314G.

⁷³ I. Samuel Memorandum, 30 September 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/305.

⁷⁴ FO to PRPG, 21 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/310G. Harold Caccia elaborated on this strategy while conversing with American diplomats in London in late December 1955; see *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 202. Another articulation of British *quid pro quo* strategy came during *Bonaparte*, after US Ambassador Aldrich expressed concern that Anglo-Saudi territorial disputes might appear on the Security Council docket; see *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 183.

the decisive element in their conclusion. This commodity possessed too much importance to jeopardise in any way.

Shuckburgh remarked on the necessity of “tak[ing] calculated risks and act[ing] strongly in defence of these vital interests,” and his colleagues agreed. Caccia took an even more assertive position, noting that while a surprise attack on Saudi nationals “is of course strong meat,” the alternative of “let[ting] Saudi Arabia make major inroads into our whole Gulf position” was unthinkable. Since Gulf petroleum “is not a luxury for Britain...unlike the United States, our industrial activity for the next twenty years depends on [this oil],” Britain simply had to expel all Saudis immediately. Macmillan agreed with these conclusions, thereby marking the official appearance of Operation *Bonaparte*, a comprehensive British plan for establishing authority throughout Eastern Arabian disputed areas.⁷⁵

While British authorities refined plans for forcibly occupying Buraimi and points beyond, Shuckburgh simultaneously misled Saudi Arabia about British intentions. He planned to “engage in some deception,” to persuade Saudi officials that London intended to continue arbitration, perhaps via a reconstituted tribunal or some other arrangement. A successful effort in this endeavour might enhance surprise for British operations, thereby minimising the danger that *Bonaparte* would result in a deadlock. To this end, Shuckburgh lied to the Saudi Ambassador when the two met in mid-October, informing

⁷⁵ C.A.E. Shuckburgh to I. Kirkpatrick, 11 October 1955; G. Fitzmaurice Minute, 12 October 1955; H. Caccia Minute, 12 October 1955; H. Macmillan Minute, 13 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114625 EA1081/403. Macmillan later obscured petroleum’s paramount role in British Persian Gulf decision-making. At a 2 November 1955 press conference, responding to a question, “Is there any British oil interest involved at the Buraimi dispute?” Macmillan answered negatively. He also denied any regional rivalry between British and American oil companies. (PRO FO 371/114627) Other Foreign Office comments belie these claims, however. In mid-November, for example, Shuckburgh asserted that British Arabian policy hinged on the “absolutely vital significance of our Persian Gulf position *and therefore to our own economy.*” (PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/24) Operational name *Bonaparte* did not appear until 22 October 1955; see that date’s PRPG to FO, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/316G.

him London regarded arbitration as “still in effect,” and suggesting this situation would not change in the immediate future.⁷⁶

British officials had, of course, decided in early October to denounce arbitration, but deliberately concealed this fact for several weeks, until after military operations had run their course.⁷⁷ Since Saudi Arabia hoped arbitration would continue, Shuckburgh’s ploy offered the promise of great success. Saudi officials attempted to resume legal proceedings immediately, requesting British delegates return to Geneva so arbitrators could reconvene their tribunal.⁷⁸ These expectations allowed Shuckburgh to string Saudi authorities along until Britain had completed operational preparations.

Another facet of this broadly-based deception plan entailed a proposal instructing British diplomats in Jeddah to request Saudi approval for November supply flights into Buraimi. Clearance for such flights would be irrelevant in November, since existing British plans called for oasis occupation in late October, but such a ploy might help catch Saudi Arabia off-guard, and magnify *Bonaparte*’s shock value.⁷⁹

While Shuckburgh deceived Saudi diplomats, the Foreign Office secured other loose ends as well, including high-level sanction for its plans. Macmillan revealed *Bonaparte* to the Cabinet on October 15th, in a lengthy and detailed report. After reviewing the history of these boundary disputes, he noted: “[our] only safe course now is to rely upon a position of strength on the ground [and] re-occupy those parts of the disputed area...vital to our interests, [and] let...the rest go.” In this Cabinet presentation, he emphasised his belief that Buraimi represented the foremost Eastern Arabian “vital”

⁷⁶ C.A.E. Shuckburgh to I. Kirkpatrick, 11 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/296.

⁷⁷ H. Phillips to King Saud, 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114626 EA1081/425. Phillips dispatched this letter after British forces had achieved all their objectives in *Bonaparte*.

⁷⁸ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 2 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114620 EA1081/270 contains one of many Saudi entreaties to continue arbitration, in this case a formal request from the Saudi Foreign Minister to Ambassador Parkes.

region, asserting that “retaining this oasis is essential to our position in southeast Arabia...whoever controls Buraimi can dominate the Trucial States and the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, where...big oil deposits lie within easy reach of the Indian Ocean.” Britain had to maintain its prestige at Buraimi or face “very grave consequences [for] our Persian Gulf positions,” he asserted.

Although Macmillan acknowledged that overpowering Saudi policemen without warning was “of course high-handed...and would be regarded as highly provocative by Saudi Arabia and a large section of the Arab world,” he thought “stakes [are] so high we cannot afford to hesitate.” The important ‘stake’, of course, was Gulf petroleum: “...our interest in oil from Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain, and in prospective [Eastern Arabian] oil deposits [has] crucial importance.” Britain could only maintain preferential access to this oil by keeping its special Gulf edifice. This “whole [Gulf] position might easily slip away” if Saudi Arabia consolidated control at Buraimi. Regional clients would perceive British power as inexorably in decline, and perhaps seek to modify or abrogate their treaty relations with Britain, thus ending British preponderance, and opening Gulf concessionary rights to other, non-British consortia. Recent Saudi political instability also suggested Britain should resort to force immediately, Macmillan believed. In light of this turmoil in Riyadh, the improbability of a unified and coherent Saudi response meant the current time was “not a bad one to force a showdown.” Macmillan also addressed a component of *Bonaparte* that caused much British consternation over the next two weeks: whether—and if so, when and how—Britain should notify American leaders. Although he thought Washington possessed a “natural instinct to appease Saudi Arabia on account of ARAMCO interests,” Macmillan suggested informing United States

⁷⁹ PRPG to FO, 23 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/318G. One day later, Eastern Department official D.M.H. Riches disapproved Burrows’ stratagem on the grounds that it was “a little too clever” and would call into question Parkes’ integrity.

officials “slightly in advance” of *Bonaparte*’s commencement. Britain could increase its odds of securing American support at the United Nations, he thought, by emphasising that *Bonaparte* sprang from “vital economic needs, and not...any colonialist spirit.”⁸⁰

Macmillan amplified the impact of his Buraimi report by pre-empting any potential Cabinet opposition. One day before releasing this account, he submitted a Cabinet Paper outlining the importance of Middle Eastern oil to Britain. His brilliant tactic implicitly showed Buraimi’s paramount importance, situated as it was astride gateways to essential oil supplies, and thereby defused any possible controversy over proposed Foreign Office courses of action in Eastern Arabia. Macmillan described extensive British regional petroleum-related capital investments (then valued at six hundred million pounds), grimly predicted rapid acceleration of British dependence on foreign oil, and openly branded Saudi Arabia an “enemy” of Britain, thus smoothing Ministerial acceptance of aggressive solutions. The near-simultaneous release of these two reports etched an indelible connection between Buraimi and vital British interests.⁸¹

Despite this ingenious manoeuvre to outflank Cabinet opposition, Macmillan faced a problem in that *Bonaparte* involved some extremely contentious legal aspects, particularly with respect to termination of arbitration. Macmillan clearly knew of the “rather tricky” nature of British legal positions.⁸² He and Foreign Office subordinates feared Attorney General Reginald Manningham-Buller, particularly his possible

⁸⁰ “Buraimi,” 15 October 1955, PRO CAB 129 CP (55) 153. This report drew heavily from an earlier I. Samuel Memorandum (PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/305). Shuckburgh also contributed. *Descent*, 17 October 1955, p. 290 shows that Shuckburgh feared Eden’s reaction to Macmillan’s report. This was unusual since Eden was the strongest Cabinet ‘fire-breather’ on Arabian issues. Perhaps he thought Eden might dismiss Macmillan’s report as overly cautious. In his memoirs (p. 641) Macmillan denied ever having espoused an American ‘warning interval’, although clearly his first inclination was to provide such an interval.

⁸¹ “Middle East Oil,” 14 October 1955, PRO CAB 129 CP (55) 152, is Macmillan’s Cabinet Report, and a key document for understanding British Middle Eastern policy. PRO CAB 128 (55) 35th Conclusions, 18 October 1955 contains Cabinet discussion of both reports—oil and Buraimi—but the latter conclusions remain closed.

⁸² Horne, p. 371.

opposition to *Bonaparte*. Manningham-Buller's "sheer cussedness"—and the possibility he would write and circulate to Ministers a legal assessment contradicting Macmillan—posed special concern to Eastern Department officials. Such opposition, if it materialised, could "cause a lot of trouble" for existing Foreign Office planning regarding Buraimi. One avenue for bypassing any dissent along these lines was to keep Law Officers totally uninformed about ongoing Arabian preparations, as part of "maintaining the façade that Britain acted not on its own account, but on behalf of certain Persian Gulf states." In other words, the Foreign Office could circumvent "tricky" legal problems by arguing Britain acted merely as agent, rather than principal, thereby rendering these issues beyond Law Officer jurisdiction, and securing legal *carte blanche* for Gulf operations. Macmillan had worked out precisely such arrangements with Manningham-Buller's predecessor, although the Foreign Office doubted the current Attorney General would succumb to such sophistry. Therefore, Fitzmaurice recommended informing—although not consulting—Law Officers in a "general" way about upcoming British operations, in hopes that Manningham-Buller would not cause too much trouble.⁸³

Fitzmaurice's shrewd interdepartmental lobbying skills enhanced this technique, which ultimately succeeded. The Solicitor General, who "saw at once...[Britain] would lose arbitration if it continued," endorsed Foreign Office plans for "breaking off [arbitration] and giving the best reasons we could." As Fitzmaurice had expected, Manningham-Buller proved recalcitrant, and at first "made rather heavy weather" by asserting Britain had to be "quite certain [it] could prove [its] charges" before attacking Saudi policemen. Fitzmaurice explained additional time for "proving charges" was unavailable. He also suggested seizing this opportunity to rectify unfavourable Arabian circumstances represented a better option than accepting an inevitable defeat at Saudi

⁸³ G. Fitzmaurice Memorandum, 13 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/302.

hands through inaction. Subsequently, Manningham-Buller “more or less” fell into line behind Foreign Office attitudes. With respect to his concerns that Britain possess adequate evidence to prove its allegations of malfeasance, Fitzmaurice merely suggested “cross[ing] that stile when we come to it,” a sentiment Manningham-Buller did not challenge.⁸⁴ Whether Fitzmaurice informed Britain’s senior Law Officer that British forces planned to seize foreign documents in an attempt to “prove [its] charges” is unclear. Despite these successful negotiations, Fitzmaurice maintained his suspicions of the Attorney General, recommending Macmillan “not take too much notice” of Manningham-Buller at the upcoming Cabinet meeting, which convened on October 18th.

Whether Macmillan followed these suggestions is unknown, since this particular Cabinet dialogue and conclusion is closed until 2006. Therefore, ascertaining precisely what transpired at that discussion is impossible, although, as is clear from other evidence, Ministers did deliberate on Macmillan’s recommendations for *Bonaparte*. Macmillan apparently argued Saudi “bribery of disputed-area inhabitants” was sufficient in its own right to justify abandoning arbitration. Making public allegations about Hasan’s behaviour was neither necessary nor desirable, Macmillan apparently argued, although Britain should leave its options open, with perhaps a “hint there may be more in the background that has not yet come out.”⁸⁵

Macmillan’s reasoning, with its emphasis on Saudi bribery as adequate justification, is curious. As noted above, IPC, Britain, and its clients also engaged in campaigns to distribute money while arbitrators carried out their duties.⁸⁶ If Saudi ‘money dispersal’ warranted British military action, then Riyadh, by extension of this

⁸⁴ G. Fitzmaurice Memorandum, 17 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/328.

⁸⁵ G. Fitzmaurice to H. Macmillan, and C.A.E. Shuckburgh Minute, 19 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/308; H. Macmillan Memorandum to FO, 20 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/333.

⁸⁶ See, for instance, a 31 August 1955 FO brief for H. Shawcross (PRO FO 371/114618 EA1081/238) and R. Bullard’s January 1955 Report from Nice, France (PRO FO 371/114608 EA1081/8).

logic, had equivalent justification for a pre-emptive military attack of its own. Saudi Arabia clearly engaged in deplorable wrongdoing on many counts. But for Macmillan to seize on bribery as justification for British consolidation of its Eastern Arabian positions was inconsistent. Narrow legal concerns such as these constrained neither Macmillan nor the Foreign Office, however. Their main concern involved generating adequate excuses for unleashing a decisive blow to shore up British Hashemite-Gulf Arch interests.

Despite somewhat fragile British logic for rationalising *Bonaparte*, Shuckburgh recorded a Cabinet decision to “accept our Buraimi policy.” Persian Gulf Defence Committee officials now had responsibility for establishing means by which British Middle East land, air, and naval forces would carry out Ministerial mandates.⁸⁷ However, Cabinet approval did include one significant modification of Macmillan’s original plan. He wanted to provide Washington with a measurable ‘warning interval’ between notification and operational commencement. Ministers narrowed this span to a few hours, noting that surprise and secrecy enjoyed absolutely paramountcy, for political and military reasons.⁸⁸

Most likely Eden led efforts to minimise any ‘warning interval’, given his long-established pattern of a recondite approach to alliance consultation. This predisposition emerged long before 1955—his stance several years earlier during Operation *Boxer* is particularly illustrative—and did not end with *Bonaparte*, as Eden demonstrated during the 1956 Suez crisis. His reasons for reticence in these and other episodes are not entirely

⁸⁷ *Descent*, 18 October 1955, p. 291.

⁸⁸ MOD to GHQMEF, 19 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/313G. C.A.E. Shuckburgh’s 22 October 1955 Memorandum (PRO FO 371/114625 EA1081/411) differs slightly on this count, remarking Ministers decided to scrap any ‘warning interval.’ H. Caccia’s 21 October 1955 Memorandum to UK Embassy Washington (FO 371/114621 EA1081/286G) is generally similar to Shuckburgh, while exhibiting ambiguity about precisely who orchestrated ‘warning interval’ abandonment. Of these three documents, the MOD Memorandum is most credible in my opinion, since it appeared the soonest after Ministerial conclusions. In any event, declassification in 2006 should settle this controversy. Macmillan’s recommendation favouring a ‘warning interval’ is Conclusion #1 in PRO CAB 129 (55) CP 153, 15 October 1955.

clear, although his silence probably flowed from at least two factors. The first involved lack of trust in the United States.⁸⁹ He feared American authorities would tip off British adversaries, thereby spoiling the secrecy and surprise so essential for military success.⁹⁰

He also anticipated American objections if Britain revealed its intentions, thereby disrupting operational timetables and complicating British efforts to carry plans through to fruition. Eden preferred to make his moves without the spectre of explicit American opposition hanging over his head—he could always deal with that *after* securing British objectives. A few weeks after *Bonaparte* had concluded, Macmillan acknowledged this important point in his response to a Parliamentary Question. He explained Ministerial decisions for non-consultation based on an assumption Washington “would try very hard to deflect us from our course if [it] knew beforehand.” He suggested American opposition to “manifestations of colonialism” might compel the United States to resist British military operations in the Gulf.⁹¹

Eden’s unilateral attitudes become especially apparent when examining his actions after Ministers had agreed to a ‘few-hours-prior warning interval’ for *Bonaparte*. He orchestrated adjustment of this policy, essentially overturning it so American authorities received *no* ‘warning interval.’ Notification came after, not before, *Bonaparte*’s initiation. Although Eden did not want *Washington* to obtain prior

⁸⁹ Eden trusted Australia, Canada, and New Zealand more than he trusted the United States, instructing that the former group could be informed well before *Bonaparte* began, despite prior Foreign Office sentiments that Commonwealth countries should receive the same ‘alert’ status as Washington. Whether any opposition arose against this modification is unclear. See D.M.H. Riches Memorandum, 24 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/334 and FO Memorandum, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114625 EA1081/398.

⁹⁰ I. Kirkpatrick to UK Embassy Washington, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/331G demonstrates Eden’s conviction that he could not trust the Americans to keep a secret.

⁹¹ PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/500. In early November, Emmanuel Shinwell, MP and former Secretary of State for War, submitted this question about prior consultation of the United States. Related exchanges between Macmillan and Members of Parliament are in *Hansard* Vol. 545, 7 November 1955, p. 1462. Some MPs, such as Shinwell and Alfred Robens, expressed disappointment at Macmillan for not taking Washington into British confidence; see also the *Times*, 8 November 1955, p. 4. In memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and F. Russell, 8 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/24 Shuckburgh confided to

notification, he did favour giving British diplomats *in* Washington early warning. On October 21st, Caccia informed Makins of ongoing “preparations to seize...Buraimi and re-occupy [disputed] territory,” suggesting such action would commence “very shortly,” although warning Makins “not—repeat not—[to] communicate [this message] to [the] State [Department] in advance, but only when operations start.” Caccia, anticipating strong American protests, suggested Makins fall back on September warnings to the State Department that Britain “might have to let arbitration die and declare our own frontier.”⁹²

Caccia’s paraphrase of Shuckburgh not only neglected Shuckburgh’s *specific and deliberate omission* of any discussion of military action, but also overlooked his important qualification that British action would only involve territory “well clear of conflicting oil operations” and under “effective [British] occupation.” To fit unilateral frontier declarations, and sweeping military operations against Buraimi villages as contemplated in *Bonaparte*, within these stipulations is difficult or impossible.⁹³

Makins, an astute observer of American politics, responded pessimistically to non-consultation. He predicted strongly adverse United States reactions, particularly because of growing American concern that Saudi Arabia might abandon the West by adopting a neutral, or even pro-Soviet, alignment. Makins thought he might gain diplomatic breathing room by offering up a rationale that Britain “did not wish to embarrass [American authorities] by taking them into our confidence beforehand.” However, because of his concerns over poor political timing, and probable poor

Russell that British leaders opposed informing Washington of *Bonaparte* beforehand since American authorities “might...try to persuade us not to do it.”

⁹² FO to Embassy Washington, 21 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/286G.

⁹³ Memcon: C.A.E. Shuckburgh and F. Wilkins, 29 September 1955; P. Broad Minute, 19 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114621 EA1081/286G. Broad claimed that this conversation meant “[Washington] can certainly not complain that [it] did not get advance warning,” but Shuckburgh did not give Wilkins any meaningful information beyond a few vague pronouncements about possible courses of action, and specifically did *not* mention military force.

American reactions to non-consultation, he begged for authorisation of a ‘warning interval.’⁹⁴

A few days before Makins pleaded for this policy modification, a similar movement arose amongst Foreign Office staff. Shuckburgh suggested Macmillan could brief Dulles in strict confidence late on October 25th, approximately six hours before *Bonaparte* began. High-level consultation would be especially convenient as both Secretaries of State planned to be in Paris at that time, preparatory to an East-West summit in Geneva. Macmillan agreed with this plan.⁹⁵

Eden, however, dismissed out of hand his subordinates’ surging interest in a ‘warning interval.’ He forbade Macmillan from speaking to Dulles in advance of *Bonaparte*.⁹⁶ He also scotched Makins’ bid, justifying his decision “in view of the danger of leakage.” Instructions regarding the manner in which Makins should present British actions to American officials accompanied Eden’s disapproval, in the form of a stark, frank, and somewhat desperate manifesto, revealing the depth of Anglo-Saudi animosity and petroleum’s absolute primacy in formulation of British Middle Eastern strategy. This exposition, which Kirkpatrick composed, instructed Makins to inform American leaders that Western powers had to do their utmost to keep Gulf oil resources out of the “clutches” of “primitive, irresponsible, and expansionist” Saudi Arabia. Kirkpatrick told Makins to impress upon Washington the vital nature of these issues, particularly because

⁹⁴ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/331G. Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 28 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 363 shows that Macmillan employed Makins’ suggested excuse. Eden used an identical (and equally implausible) tactic exactly one year later during the Suez Crisis, despite post-*Bonaparte* American condemnations of this ploy.

⁹⁵ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum and H. Macmillan Minute, 22 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114625 EA1081/411.

⁹⁶ FO Memorandum, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114625 EA1081/398. Macmillan reversed his earlier advocacy of a ‘warning interval’, and backed these new instructions. See also FO to PRPG, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/315G.

Britain lacked indigenous oil reserves and needed to preserve at all costs the “lifeline...from which we draw an essential part of our fuel.”⁹⁷

Although in accordance with Eden’s veto of any *Bonaparte* ‘warning interval’ Washington remained unaware of British plans, in the early morning of October 22nd Burrows received final sanction to launch hostilities. He and his advisors spent the next few days planning and developing a complex campaign. The speed at which Burrows composed detailed plans once London approved military action demonstrates his prior contemplation regarding optimal methods for securing British objectives.⁹⁸ By minimising preparatory time for *Bonaparte*, this expediency proved a windfall. Within 24 hours of gaining authorisation to develop plans, Burrows had assembled complete battle orders. His proposed campaign had four sequential phases, with each phase further divided into smaller and more detailed components.⁹⁹

The first, and most complex, phase in this plan involved gaining control of a zone encompassing Buraimi, with particular emphasis on Hamasa village (at which the Saudi political officer resided) and al-Ain, site of Saudi police quarters. Burrows hoped to secure these objectives while operating under ‘minimum force’ guidelines, although troops under his overall command had authorisation to use deadly force, including two- and three-inch mortar fire, if such action became necessary for operational success. Burrows projected that two squadrons of Trucial Levies—Forces ‘A’ and ‘B’, under the leadership of Major V.C. Smith and Captain Anthony Steggles, respectively—would

⁹⁷ I. Kirkpatrick to UK Embassy Washington, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/331G; FO to PRPG, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/315G. Kirkpatrick gave Makins latitude to notify American authorities one hour prior to Eden’s Parliamentary speech, but even if Makins exercised this option, Washington would have been in the dark for over 12 hours.

⁹⁸ A few days earlier, MOD gave Burrows a basic outline of British expectations, which undoubtedly contributed to his expediency. Burrows also conducted preliminary planning talks with PGLDC before he received official approval to begin preparations. See PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/313G and PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/310.

⁹⁹ PRPG to FO, 22 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/316G contains Burrows’ full operational plan, including these four phases.

suffice for successful execution of phase one, although he also requested naval and air support. He anticipated important, though primarily non-combat, roles such as communications support for these latter assets. His reluctance to employ airpower in a combat capacity at that time stemmed more from logistical exigencies and political limitations than from military considerations; Royal Air Force units in theatre had extremely limited access to ordnance, and Ministers held qualms about offensive air operations in Eastern Arabia.¹⁰⁰

Phase two, outlining removal of all Saudi nationals from disputed areas, leaned even more heavily on regional British air and sea forces. Once Saudi policemen at Buraimi had surrendered or died, four Royal Air Force aircraft (one Valetta, one Pembroke, and two Ansons) would evacuate them to Sharjah, where a Royal Navy frigate would pick them up and haul them to Bahrain for repatriation. Phase three, forestalling Saudi attacks across disputed frontiers, also relied on airpower for success. Burrows ordered reconnaissance aircraft from Sharjah to prowl boundaries for any signs of Saudi incursion, and Iraq-based Venom fighter-bombers shared combat duties with British ground troops if such an attack materialised. Burrows took this threat so seriously that he later advocated significant reinforcement of British support aircraft in the Gulf theatre.¹⁰¹

Phase four in Burrows' campaign consummated a old British dream: unilateral declaration, and establishment through military force, of frontiers approximating the Riyadh Line, in accordance with Foreign Office guidance.¹⁰² Trucial Levies would secure this objective by travelling south and west from Sharjah, in the process occupying key

¹⁰⁰ Initially, Burrows exhibited skepticism regarding the value of RAF tactical combat operations at Buraimi, but he warmed to the idea after pondering 'worst-case scenarios.' Despite bomb shortages, British air assets in theatre did have adequate stockpiles of ball ammunition and rockets, which Burrows received authorisation to use under certain circumstances. See his dispatch to FO, 23 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/317G.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² I. Samuel Memorandum, 20 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114625 EA1081/408, which also illustrates long-term IPC influence with, and strong connections to, Whitehall.

strategic points such as Nakhla along new Eastern Arabian unilateral boundaries. These Levy detachments would bypass certain other important posts because of geographical remoteness; some areas required a two-week camelback trek for access. Logistical problems inherent in such expeditions outweighed any military, political, or economic benefits.

In addition to these four chronological phases, Burrows also stipulated fundamental preconditions for British success. Acting under cover of darkness constituted the most important of these, as he believed daylight operations rendered surprise impossible, thus leading to serious Saudi resistance and potentially high casualties for both sides.¹⁰³ In itself, however, loss of surprise did *not* compel termination of *Bonaparte*. Another critical factor involved political dimensions. To execute operations at maximum efficiency, Levy troops required detailed knowledge of villager sympathies, customs, and dialect. To this end, Burrows capitalised on intimate Anglo-IPC connections by enlisting IPC employee Edward Henderson to act as on-site British political advisor. During *Bonaparte*, Henderson accompanied Trucial Levies at Buraimi, and provided expertise to ranking on-site British military commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Eric Johnson.¹⁰⁴

Although Burrows retained a remarkable degree of operational independence and flexibility, London kept tight reins on rules of engagement and other politically sensitive issues. Primary concerns were 'acceptable' types and levels of force and firepower, proper guidelines for military escalation, and overall operational objectives. Guidelines for employment of British airpower received particular scrutiny, undergoing continuous evolution in mid- and late October. Initially, British leaders strongly disapproved use of

¹⁰³ PRPG to FO, 21 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/310.

¹⁰⁴ PRPG to FO, 23 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/317G; PRPG to FO, 10 July 1956, PRO FO 371/120589 EA1081/283. Henderson, p. 155 elaborates on British command structures.

air assets beyond absolute minimum requirements. Political factors drove this reluctance; the spectacle of Royal Air Force warplanes unleashing a hail of bombs and bullets on poorly armed desert nomads at first proved more than Ministers could stomach. At this point, Burrows' authority to use aerial bombardment extended only to dire emergencies, such as a large-scale Saudi incursion across disputed frontiers.¹⁰⁵ But increasing British recognition—with the Chiefs of Staff in the vanguard—of ‘fog and friction’ and other unexpected contingencies attendant with any military operation prompted broad expansion of airpower mandates, such that Burrows shortly gained full authority to use offensive air action in support of British ground forces, if such tactics might spell the difference between overall success and failure.¹⁰⁶ Airpower had, after all, long constituted an important element in high-level British planning for Anglo-Saudi hostilities, so this noticeable shift away from tight constraints is perhaps unsurprising.¹⁰⁷

Between *Bonaparte*’s original incarnation and the eve of its initiation, available ‘close air support’ assets had doubled. Royal Air Force Lincoln bombers supplied this firepower, and a special team of ground and air liaison officers from Aden stood by to handle target identification if aerial combat operations commenced. By October 25th, Burrows had latitude to unleash such an onslaught if doing so hastened Levy success at Buraimi; this constituted yet another ‘loosening’ of the rules of engagement for British airpower.¹⁰⁸

Whitehall also instructed that Trucial Levies “make every effort to secure evidence of Saudi malpractices [when] tak[ing] over the Saudi police camp and wireless

¹⁰⁵ MOD to GHQMELF, 19 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/313G.

¹⁰⁶ COSC (55) 260th Meeting, 17 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/313G. The Chiefs were adamant that Burrows gain authority to launch offensive air operations at his discretion. By October 21st COS had converted the Foreign Office to more lenient rules of engagement, on the grounds that British operations would suffer if “Burrows’ hands [were] absolutely tied.” See COSC Memorandum, 21 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/325G.

¹⁰⁷ GHQMELF to MOD, 22 June 1955, PRO DEFE 11/77.

transmitter.”¹⁰⁹ This directive had particular salience because “evidence of malpractices,” if found, assisted British efforts to pre-empt expected Saudi appeals to international legal organisations. Also, in more general terms, British officials needed some justification for unilaterally and secretly denouncing arbitration; by demonstrating Saudi malfeasance, Britain did much to enhance its case.

Since *Bonaparte* involved vital British interests, it received considerable attention at high levels of the British government. On Sunday morning, October 23rd, a group of very senior British political and military officials met at the Defence Minister’s home, and scrutinised *Bonaparte* extensively.¹¹⁰ Their review, which included an assessment of force levels, security factors, and logistical issues, postponed British approval of Burrows’ operational plan to such an extent that he warned of inevitable delays if he did not receive immediate authorisation. Sharjah-based Trucial Levies who spearheaded *Bonaparte* needed to move toward Buraimi well in advance of actual hostilities, but Burrows could not initiate these manoeuvres without top-level sanction.¹¹¹ As any pause had become politically unacceptable—Ministers now ordered Britain’s campaign proceed with minimum delay—the Foreign Office quickly took appropriate steps to secure approval for *Bonaparte*. In late afternoon of October 23rd, Bahrain gained official clearance to launch Burrows’ plan.¹¹²

As H-Hour approached, Eden became anxious about British military preparations, fearing *Bonaparte* might bog down into a protracted stalemate requiring costly long-term Eastern Arabian troop deployments. He suggested hostilities might be more intense than

¹⁰⁸ PRPG to FO, 25 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/326G. Successive relaxation of airpower ‘rules of engagement’ took place at three-day intervals following initial Ministerial strictures.

¹⁰⁹ FO to PRPG, 21 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/310G, which also notes “extreme [Cabinet] anxiety” over possible British bombardments.

¹¹⁰ FO Memorandum, 23 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/335G.

¹¹¹ PRPG to FO, 23 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/310/G/C.

¹¹² FO to PRPG, 23 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/310G.

initial British forecasts, and might persist for weeks or even months—rather than a few days. To palliate these misgivings, he instructed Defence Ministry authorities to modify plans, with an emphasis on *increasing* force levels. More troops, including a squadron of the Royal Air Force regiment from Iraq and a company of British elite forces from Cyrenaica, now moved to Sharjah on D-Day.¹¹³

Eden thereby capitalised on existing Chiefs of Staff contingency plans for “local war...in connection with frontier disputes or oil prospecting,” which entailed airlift of British reinforcements into Eastern Arabia.¹¹⁴ The reasons behind his revisions—literally on the eve of Britain’s attack—are not entirely clear. Eden did inform the Chiefs of Staff that supplementing British regional forces “[will] show [Saudi Arabia] we mean business” and serve as a strategic reserve in case of unexpected difficulty, while providing moral support to Trucial Levies. Eden also lacked confidence in Trucial Levy capabilities, discipline, and skill; introducing British troops in a reserve capacity reduced risks that events might unfold in unfavourable ways.¹¹⁵ Given these extensive modifications, Eden probably suffered last-minute jitters, although no tangible factors indicated Saudi resistance would necessarily exceed initial British predictions. Like Eden, Burrows also advocated deployment of additional troops as H-Hour approached. His unease probably stemmed from Henderson’s warning that two Trucial Levy squadrons were probably inadequate to fulfill mission objectives.¹¹⁶

Desert Victory: Operation Bonaparte and Its Military and Political Legacies

Bonaparte commenced before dawn local time (approximately midnight in London and early evening in Washington) on October 26th, when Forces ‘A’ and ‘B’

¹¹³ FO Memorandum, 23 October 1955; D.M.H. Riches Memorandum, 24 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/335G; MOD to GHQMELF, 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/354. The Land Rover-equipped 1st Battalion, King’s Royal Rifle Corps, was the elite Cyrenaica-based force.

¹¹⁴ COSC Memorandum (55) 220, 1 September 1955, PRO DEFE 11/77.

¹¹⁵ Confidential Annex, COSC (55) 88th Meeting, 24 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/335G.

entered Buraimi. 'A' launched a successful surprise attack against Saudi policemen encamped near al-Ain; 'B' proceeded to Hamasa village, and attacked the homes and fortresses of Bedouin sheikhs loyal to Saudi Arabia. 'B' did not achieve surprise, and a vicious firefight ensued. Approximately two hundred pro-Saudi tribesmen, under Obaid Bin Juma's leadership, unleashed heavy fire from their fortifications at Bait Ageel, pinning down British forces and killing two Levies. Burrows, who exercised overall operational responsibility from his Bahrain command post, authorised an increase in firepower to end this resistance; Levy forces subsequently fired mortar barrages against Hamasa strongpoints.¹¹⁷ Via the airlift of a motorised company of British elite troops from Cyrenaica and deployment of additional Levies, Burrows also authorised reinforcement of his initial detachments.¹¹⁸ Lincoln bombers circled overhead, awaiting orders from Henderson to deliver their ordnance.¹¹⁹

While fighting raged in and around Buraimi, Eden announced *Bonaparte* to Parliament. He proclaimed arbitration officially dead, and declared Eastern Arabian boundary disputes had ended. According to his pronunciamento, new, non-negotiable frontiers now approximated the Riyadh Line, and Britain would tolerate no Saudi presence east of that demarcation.¹²⁰

Through a series of parleys with enemy forces, Henderson negotiated favourable surrender terms for pro-Saudi sheikhs, in which they would leave Buraimi, but travel to

¹¹⁶ PRPG to FO, 23 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/317G; Henderson, p. 156.

¹¹⁷ PRPG to FO, 31 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114624 EA1081/381; *Descent*, 26 October 1955, p. 292; Henderson, pp. 160-61.

¹¹⁸ SNOPG Memorandum, 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/356; PRPG to FO, 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/330G. Reinforcements arriving on October 26th were additional Trucial Levies, as well as a detachment of IPC-funded MOFF; 1st Battalion, KRRC, did not arrive at Sharjah until early November.

¹¹⁹ Mann, p. 58.

¹²⁰ *Hansard* Vol. 545, 26 October 1955, pp. 198-201. This speech included a questionable assertion that Abu Dhabi and Muscati "Ruler[s] have scrupulously observed the arbitration conditions..." US Embassy London to DOS, 26 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 183 contains American ambassadorial summary and reaction to this address.

Dammam rather than face treason charges in Muscat. They accepted, capitulating in early evening. Burrows later estimated Henderson's negotiating skill avoided "very hazardous night attacks which would have undoubtedly resulted in scores of casualties on both sides."¹²¹ At nightfall, a few pockets of resistance continued, although newly-reinforced Levies now had each of these isolated and leaderless detachments completely surrounded.¹²² Under cover of darkness, Levy soldiers successfully attacked enemy positions, and *Bonaparte* ended in the early morning of October 27th when Saudi allies who had not surrendered the previous evening ceased resistance at Hamasa. British operations lasted approximately 24 hours, resulting in about three dozen casualties—around a third of that number killed and the rest injured—among pro-Saudi tribesmen. British and allied forces suffered casualties of approximately a quarter that number.¹²³

Simultaneous with British attacks at Hamasa, Trucial Levies advanced westward from Tarif, establishing new positions along Riyadh Line frontiers, in accordance with Eden's Parliamentary promulgation. These troop deployments met no resistance.¹²⁴ RAF aircraft facilitated this effort by flying 'warning' sorties against American oil survey crews camped near the Riyadh Line. Two British planes flew over a dozen simulated low-level attack patterns 150 feet above these groups in a clearly threatening display. To detect Saudi incursions, other RAF airplanes began extensive reconnaissance of these unilateral Eastern Arabian frontiers.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Henderson, p. 163; PRPG to FO, 5 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109.

¹²² PRPG to FO, 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/330G.

¹²³ PRPG to FO, 27 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/337. *Economist*, 29 October 1955, p. 379 describes *Bonaparte*. Because of misleading and inaccurate statements—such as an assertion that British operations resulted in no fatal casualties, which directly contradicts Burrows' 31 October 1955 after-action report—this piece warrants caution. I base casualty estimates on Burrows' report (PRO FO 371/114624 EA1081/381), as well as his other dispatches while *Bonaparte* transpired. Mann, p. 58 also discusses operational casualties. I disregard Saudi claims regarding casualties, as these seem wildly inaccurate and exaggerated.

¹²⁴ PRPG to FO, 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114622 EA1081/330G.

¹²⁵ US Consulate General Dhahran to DOS, 30 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 186; UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 3 November 1955; PRPG to FO, 5 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109. American oil crews

British diplomats in Washington first notified American authorities of these ongoing military operations more than twelve hours after they began.¹²⁶ Makins informed Hoover and Wilkins that British forces were currently expelling all Saudis from Buraimi. Wilkins expressed his conviction Britain should have tried more persistently for a peaceful settlement, rather than resorting to “drastic action.”¹²⁷

Hoover, while initially non-committal, soon veered toward outrage as he pondered wide-ranging implications of *Bonaparte*. Particularly galling was British non-consultation. He informed Makins such secrecy had “taken him aback.” He resented as selfish unilateral British actions in an area where countries other than Britain held important interests, and feared an escalating Arabian confrontation; perhaps Saudi forces would launch major counter-offensives in or near Buraimi. Hoover also thought British operations might fatally poison any hope of Anglo-Saudi rapprochement. Makins could only respond with a pretext he and the Foreign Office had conjured up immediately prior to *Bonaparte*: London actually did Washington a favour through its non-consultation, because American leaders could therefore disavow any responsibility. Hoover rejected this rationale.¹²⁸ He conceded British military operations might “divert attention from other things”—possibly referring to extreme tension along Syrian-Iraqi borders, or recent Israeli raids against Egypt—but in any event Britain had not intended *Bonaparte* as a diversion, and on balance, Hoover decisively opposed these new Eastern Arabian policies. As days passed, his attitudes toward British military initiatives hardened, shifting from defensive astonishment to offensive assertion. Rather than waiting for

claimed to be in undisputed Saudi territory when RAF planes ‘buzzed’ them, leading ARAMCO to protest formally. Subsequent investigations (PRPG to FO, 29 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109) revealed that these missions had indeed violated Saudi airspace, forcing the Foreign Office to extend diplomatic apologies.

¹²⁶ Hart, p. 64.

¹²⁷ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/338.

British diplomats to call, as had been the case immediately after *Bonaparte*, he tracked Makins down and delivered stern lectures.¹²⁹

Dulles, in Europe for an East-West summit, personally expressed his disappointment to Macmillan, although he apparently restrained his emotions while criticising British policies.¹³⁰ Poor operational timing—coming as *Bonaparte* did during Saudi deliberations concerning Soviet bloc weapons offers—annoyed Dulles most of all, although British non-consultation vexed the Secretary, too.¹³¹ He predicted *Bonaparte*'s legacy would be much “trouble” regarding not only Middle Eastern issues, but broader Anglo-American relations as well.¹³² Dulles also anticipated deleterious consequences for Western access to Saudi oil.¹³³ In accordance with a pre-determined line, Macmillan fell back on the justification Makins suggested: London avoided advance notice “since clearly [the United States] would not wish to assume any responsibility for [Bonaparte].”¹³⁴ Referring to Shuckburgh’s September statements, Macmillan also insinuated that American officials had enough information to infer the imminence of British military action.¹³⁵ Perhaps realising the lack of substance in this parry, Kirkpatrick pursued a different and less defensive angle. He responded to Dulles’ indignation by

¹²⁸ Memcon: H. Hoover, G. Allen, R. Murphy, R. Makins, 27 October 1955, JFD:DOS Box 44; UK Embassy Washington to FO, 27 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/351. Hoover similarly rejected Britain’s ‘non-consultation’ pretext one year later during the Suez crisis.

¹²⁹ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 3 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114626 EA1081/432.

¹³⁰ Macmillan, in his record of their conversation, asserts that Dulles was “very calm” when discussing Buraimi. See PRO FO 371/114624 EA1081/369. His memoirs provide a similar description, p. 641. Shuckburgh characterised Dulles’ reaction as “not unpleasant” (*Descent*, 26 October 1955, p. 292). RBI confirms Dulles’ disappointment at British actions.

¹³¹ See Chapter Two for information on delicate Saudi-American relations following Egyptian arms procurement from the Soviet bloc.

¹³² Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 28 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 363. American and British accounts of this discussion are very similar.

¹³³ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 26 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 358.

¹³⁴ US Embassy London to DOS, 26 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 183.

¹³⁵ FO Memorandum: “Speaking Notes,” 26 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114624 EA1081/379.

suggesting Washington stick to its own business. The Persian Gulf was a British sphere, he retorted, and Britain intended to maintain primary responsibility there.¹³⁶

American diplomats in London learned of *Bonaparte* a few hours later, via Eden's Parliamentary speech. Although these officials had much briefer exchanges with British leaders than aforementioned Hoover-Makins or Macmillan-Dulles dialogues, these interactions contained a similarly negative character. Foreign Office representatives informed Aldrich that had Britain not attacked Buraimi, "Saudi Arabia would have occupied the area, and the United Kingdom could not permit this...Maintenance of Britain's Persian Gulf position clearly required some action." Aldrich responded by warning that Washington looked unfavourably upon British military activities along disputed Eastern Arabian frontiers. Dismissive attitudes regarding possible Saudi countermoves—in the wake of *Bonaparte*, British authorities bragged, Riyadh "could do little except perhaps take [this] matter to [the] United Nations"—also troubled Aldrich. Since he typically exhibited much sympathy to British endeavours, his disappointment at British military operations in Buraimi demonstrate how deeply *Bonaparte* destabilised Anglo-American relations.¹³⁷

Although United States reactions to *Bonaparte* left much to be desired as far as London was concerned, Saudi responses proved even worse. For a few days, Riyadh gave appearances that Anglo-Saudi relations might collapse completely. Despite obvious anger, the Saudi Ambassador maintained his diplomatic professionalism upon hearing of *Bonaparte*. He politely informed Shuckburgh that these military operations would merely drive Riyadh deeper into Egyptian arms, rather than generating any Western benefits.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/19G and J.F. Dulles to DOS, 3 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 384 both contain the text of Kirkpatrick's note to Dulles.

¹³⁷ DOS:TSDSS Box 89, 28 October 1955. Although WAOH/II does not discuss *Bonaparte*, it does describe Aldrich's generally warm relations with his British counterparts.

¹³⁸ *Descent*, 28 and 29 October 1955, pp. 293-94.

Saud and his council of advisors showed less restraint. During a meeting with Phillips, the King “trembled with rage” and showed every sign of a counterstrike; Saud’s Senior Foreign Affairs Advisor, Khalid al-Qurqani, unleashed several “emotional outbursts” against British provocations.¹³⁹ Saud’s threatened counterstrike materialised about one month later. He exacted vengeance in Jordan, far from Buraimi but only slightly less damaging to British interests.

British officials did not immediately suspect revenge so far afield, but they had keen awareness of other significant vulnerabilities.¹⁴⁰ One obvious trouble spot involved oil revenues, by far Saudi Arabia’s most potent weapon. Well before *Bonaparte*, Iraqi leaders had in fact advocated interdicting these revenues.¹⁴¹ Since Nuri and British Middle Eastern ambassadors understood more clearly than authorities in London the dangerous possibilities of Saudi petrodollars, that British diplomats in Lebanon hatched a specific plan to curtail Saudi spending, and thereby deflate hostile influence, was natural. These officials proposed British representations requesting official American interference with ARAMCO, to cut off payments to Saudi Arabia. A financial interdiction of this sort could produce “immediate [British] dividends.”¹⁴²

Over the next month, the Foreign Office and Cabinet (Official) Middle East Committee developed and refined manoeuvres for bringing these and related schemes to fruition, such as compelling American companies and banks to: halt immediately all Saudi advances, impose a six-month payments delay, or reduce or cease entirely all petroleum production in Saudi Arabia. Since British experts thought Iraqi “political

¹³⁹ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 31 October & 3 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114626 EA1081/426 & 30. Burrows, p. 103, says Saudi reactions were “rather more muted than might have been expected,” but Saud’s response seems to strain the definition of “muted.”

¹⁴⁰ Although Shuckburgh, in a decidedly premature conclusion, boasted that Britain stood a “good chance of getting away with our Buraimi action...” See PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/523.

¹⁴¹ Gallman, p. 163. In October 1955, Nuri sought to blunt Saudi financial power in Syria, thus gaining the “free hand” he coveted.

¹⁴² UK Embassy Beirut to FO, 31 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114625 EA1081/396.

action”—in which Baghdad increased its payments to various regional factions—might also mitigate unfavourable Saudi spending patterns, the topic of Arabian Peninsula oil revenues constituted a major discussion item at the late November Baghdad Pact summit.¹⁴³ American reluctance to intervene in purely commercial affairs involving private enterprise undercut these initiatives. British authorities persisted, however, orchestrating similar plans in early 1956.

Temporary setbacks regarding Saudi revenue transpired in a context of broader British problems. The inherently military character of *Bonaparte* exposed Britain to a variety of potentially damaging politico-legal measures; while fighting at Buraimi sputtered to a halt, London took dramatic steps to minimise any vulnerabilities. A possible Saudi appeal to the International Court of Justice constituted an extremely dangerous threat to British positions; through such action Saudi diplomats could demand complete Trucial Levy evacuation, and recommend dismissal of post-*Bonaparte* boundary proclamations. If The Hague found in Saudi favour, public relations consequences for British interests would obviously be averse. British legal experts noted this unfavourable situation, assessed relevant risks, and selected an interesting solution, which pivoted on international legal clauses framing acceptance of Court authority as purely voluntary—states could, if they so chose, withdraw from Court jurisdiction, although exclusion could not be selective, varying from case to case. Britain chose to preempt Saudi appeals by hurriedly revoking its acceptance of *any* International Court jurisdiction, effective October’s last day. This decision came after Eastern Department officials unanimously agreed such withdrawal represented a ‘lesser evil’ with respect to

¹⁴³ The depth and breadth of British attempts to persuade American authorities to limit Saudi income are apparent in several places. PRO CAB 134/1086 OME (55) 29, 28 November 1955 and OME (55) 16th Meeting, 29 November 1955 contain very detailed discussion of this issue. See also *Descent*, 22 November 1955, p. 303; PRO CAB 128 (55) 43rd Conclusions, 24 November 1955; and H. Macmillan Memorandum, 25 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 PM/55/172.

British interests, since Court rulings were likely to be “disastrous.” Court jurisdiction especially frightened Foreign Office legal experts, who predicted an outright loss for Britain, whether Saudi representatives appealed the entire dispute, or only British denunciation of arbitration.¹⁴⁴

This timely manoeuvre succeeded in thwarting any Saudi attempt to bring boundary issues before the Court. To divert attention from this stratagem, British officials simultaneously offered to open direct Anglo-Saudi talks, in an apparently genuine gesture of sincere interest in negotiated boundary settlements. This demarche was a façade; the Foreign Office had no intention of partaking in “serious negotiations.” Instead, its plan involved “spin[ning] out [such talks] indefinitely,” until the Buraimi furore subsided.¹⁴⁵ At that point, London could drop its pretext of sincerity and abandon negotiations altogether.

The United Nations spectre posed another ongoing legal concern for Britain. British avenues for fending off this threat were twofold; route one was *Bonaparte*’s ‘fishing expedition’ component. Although British officials had no idea if incriminating evidence existed in Eastern Arabia, Trucial Levies and their British officers went to extraordinary lengths in seizing all paperwork, signal traffic, personal effects, and other items during the course of the Buraimi campaign, despite the questionable morality of forcefully confiscating another country’s official documents.¹⁴⁶ In fact, *Bonaparte*’s first gunfire occurred as a result of standing British orders to ‘seize all.’ As Force ‘A’ swept

¹⁴⁴ PRO CAB 134/1086 OME (55) 11th Meeting, 21 September 1955; D.M.H. Riches and E.R. Warner Minutes, 27 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114626 EA1081/437. The Foreign Office attributed probable Saudi success at the International Court to that body’s “anti-colonial bias.” For details on the actual procedure of British withdrawal from Court jurisdiction, see PRO 371/114625 EA1081/395, particularly the 3rd November FO memorandum.

¹⁴⁵ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum and I. Kirkpatrick Minute, 14 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/523.

¹⁴⁶ PRO 371/114624 EA1081/376, especially FO Memorandum, Annex A, 31 October 1955, and FO to UK Embassy Washington, 1 November 1955, decisively eliminate any notion that Britain had definitive

into Saudi Arabia's police detachment at al-Ain, a scuffle broke out when detachment commander Abdullah bin Nami refused to relinquish his personal effects. Major Smith shot the man, while Levies under Smith's command dealt with his attendants. This combination of bullets and rifle butts triumphed, allowing Smith to confiscate everything and send the material to Bahrain.¹⁴⁷ Once the Political Residency had consolidated all material captured at Buraimi, British authorities again turned to IPC for help, which eagerly complied. Anglo-IPC collaboration on this occasion included efforts to translate and interpret all Saudi material. Based on his familiarity with Geneva proceedings and arbitration parameters, IPC's Dunn spearheaded these endeavours.¹⁴⁸

A strong bid for American support at the Security Council comprised the second component in British efforts to outflank Saudi legal remedies. This strategy proved problematic. Categorical British refusals to provide a 'warning interval' rendered impossible any prior Anglo-American coordination. To defeat Saudi appeals, therefore, cajoling the United States into immediate advocacy of British arguments once *Bonaparte* commenced would be necessary, in the hope that this support might carry over into any Anglo-Saudi United Nations dispute, thus tipping the balance in Britain's favour. Since Washington gave little promise of granting such assistance *during* Security Council proceedings, pre-emptive strategies offered more appeal. If the United States balked at offering full United Nations support, perhaps Britain could convince American officials to dissuade Saudi Arabia from taking its case there *at all*, thereby avoiding an ugly and potentially embarrassing confrontation in New York. Accordingly, simultaneous with their military activities in disputed territories, British leaders pressured Washington to

knowledge of incriminating evidence at Buraimi *before* launching *Bonaparte*. The Foreign Office could only speculate that confiscated Saudi papers "may well provide...proof" confirming British allegations.

¹⁴⁷ V.C. Smith Memorandum, 29 October 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109; PRPG to FO, 31 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114624 EA1081/381; Henderson, p. 158. Major Smith shot Nami in the leg; he survived his wounds.

restrain Riyadh from legal action. Pierson Dixon, Britain's United Nations Ambassador, led this effort, although many others participated.¹⁴⁹ Some British efforts verged on downright heavy-handedness. When, shortly after *Bonaparte*, Hoover suggested mutual consultation and coordination as an effective approach for restoring Atlantic unity, the Foreign Office proposed Washington inaugurate this collaborative recommendation by abandoning its long-standing impartiality in Arabian boundary disputes. Such a switch entailed full Security Council support for Britain if American dissuasion failed to offset an Anglo-Saudi legal confrontation, British officials suggested.¹⁵⁰

A dramatic policy shift of this sort could hardly have been what Hoover had in mind. British authorities also tried to secure American assistance by stressing the extreme difficulty Washington faced if Arabian boundary disputes actually appeared on the Security Council docket. State Department authorities would encounter a Hobson's choice: "refusing to support us...or giving Saudi Arabia a pretext for taking damaging action against ARAMCO and the [Dhahran] airbase." Common Anglo-American regional interests made the former course unthinkable, suggested Whitehall, so dedicated American efforts to restrain Saudi Arabia represented the only real possibility.¹⁵¹ British emphasis on the paucity of American options post-*Bonaparte* probably constituted an ineffective, or even counterproductive, technique, since this approach underscored the way in which British military operations had boxed the United States into a corner: Washington now needed to decide which ally to abandon, always a painful dilemma. Additionally, British methodology noted, though discounted, the significance of possible "damaging [Saudi] action against ARAMCO and Dhahran" if American officials strongly

¹⁴⁸ PRPG to FO, 28 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114624 EA1081/372.

¹⁴⁹ Only a few days after *Bonaparte*, Dixon began advocating diplomatic pressure on the United States; see UK UN Ambassador to FO, 29 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114624 EA1081/376.

¹⁵⁰ FO Minute, 1 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/351.

pressured Riyadh not to take its case to the United Nations. In light of Dhahran's strategic value for containment, and enormous ARAMCO contributions to Free World petroleum requirements, expecting Washington to disregard these two factors was unrealistic.

Like Britain, the United States certainly had no interest in seeing Council delegates consider Arabian boundary disputes—Dulles hoped to limit Soviet gains in the Arabian Peninsula and realised United Nations involvement would enhance, rather than curtail, Moscow's opportunities—but American opposition rested on different factors to those of Britain. These disparate perspectives rendered common Anglo-American policies almost impossible. British 'Saudi policy' regarding United Nations issues rested on *deterrence through coercion*, whereas Americans leaders sought *deterrence through compromise*. State Department pressure against Riyadh *not* to appeal *Bonaparte* might fray Saudi-American relations with resulting benefits for Moscow, Dulles thought. The strategic unpalatability of using pressure meant bilateral boundary settlements, either through immediate arbitration resumption, or British participation in some other such legal mechanism, represented the only acceptable solution for keeping Arabian territorial disputes out of the United Nations.

When in early November Hoover handed to Makins an aide-memoire outlining this notion—antithetical as compromise was to prevailing British perspectives—Anglo-American tension escalated. The State Department informed London of its intention *not* to attempt to dissuade Riyadh from an appeal in New York. The proper course, Washington insisted, lay instead with other alternatives, such as direct Anglo-Saudi talks, or renewed arbitration under the authority of a newly constituted tribunal. A fundamental precondition for each of these venues was, of course, British withdrawal of Trucial

¹⁵¹ FO Memorandum, Annex 'A', 31 October 1955; FO to UK Embassy Washington, 1 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114624 EA1081/376.

Levies from the disputed zone around Buraimi. Hoover's note also expressed concern that paradoxically, *Bonaparte* strengthened anti-Western forces in the Middle East.¹⁵²

These views outraged British leaders, whose reaction combined incredulity and scorn at "unacceptable American argumentation and proposals." Macmillan informed Dulles that American suggestions had "hurt" him.¹⁵³ London's riposte took an interesting though predictable form. British officials, recognising that 'educating' American authorities about Saudi treachery and ill intentions represented perhaps the only way to pull the United States into line, instructed Makins to condemn "corrupt, irresponsible, and anti-Western" Saudi Arabia. Their guidance told Makins to stress Saudi dalliances with Communist elements and the leading Saudi role in ongoing Arab efforts to eliminate British Middle Eastern positions, and to emphasise only *British* officials had requisite skill, experience, and influence to maintain a Persian Gulf presence for the West. To complement his anti-Saudi polemic, Makins was also to imply an American decision not to align squarely with Britain in the United Nations was synonymous with deliberately making common cause with Moscow at British expense. The Foreign Office also told Makins to remind State Department officials of firm British backing for American arguments during the previous year's Guatemalan dispute in the Security Council. Makins, realising London in fact gave Washington no support during the Guatemalan imbroglio, wisely demurred from this line of attack.¹⁵⁴ Finally, British leaders instructed Makins to display a steadfast obduracy while warning Washington that American arguments "will not cause us to alter our Buraimi policy, which we consider to be entirely

¹⁵² UK Embassy Washington to FO, 3 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114626 EA1081/432 and DOS to US Embassy Jeddah, 4 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 187 both contain the American aide-memoire's text. AGI described White House interest in bilateral negotiations to achieve a peaceful Buraimi resolution.

¹⁵³ Macmillan's comments, as well as Hoover's general sentiments on the memorandum, are in *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 189.

justified and from which we shall not withdraw." Therefore, Britain refused to consider any United States suggestions for solving Arabian boundary problems peacefully.¹⁵⁵

Although both alliance partners probably hoped this contentious debate over how to solve their nagging United Nations problem would just disappear, their repartee actually intensified through November. London pressured Dulles to browbeat Riyadh into forbearance from a Security Council appeal, and, failing that, lend all-out support to British positions, but he clung to tenuous impartiality, while imploring both adversaries to renew arbitration. As had been the case immediately post-*Bonaparte*, this attitude infuriated British leaders, who thought Dulles' policy constituted "unnecessary treachery."¹⁵⁶ In Jeddah, Phillips thought the problem might be his American counterpart, Ambassador Wadsworth, whom he accused of failing to present British arguments to Saudi or United States authorities. He also attacked Wadsworth for an "appeasement line." In general terms, London agreed with this assessment, but thought "bad...[American] behavi[our]" transcended its diplomatic legation and reached higher governmental levels.¹⁵⁷

As usual, Makins provided the most realistic and insightful perspectives on American policy. Instead of expecting the State Department to make one-sided concessions such as "abandoning Saudi [Arabia]" in support of British Persian Gulf moves, Makins advocated Anglo-American compromise. He wanted London and Washington to establish common policies enabling both countries to achieve their

¹⁵⁴ R. Makins to FO, 8 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114627 EA1081/460. Makins' anti-Saudi speech failed to have the desired effect, to which the Foreign Office responded that American "tolerance to [Saudi] bribery is probably to be expected."

¹⁵⁵ FO Memoranda, 7 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114626 EA1081/432. The Foreign Office sent both documents to British diplomats in Washington, and dispatched a similar aide-memoire (PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/504) to American officials.

¹⁵⁶ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO; FO Minute, 18 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/513.

¹⁵⁷ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 15 November 1955; FO Minute, 18 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/501. Why the British Ambassador thought his American counterpart had an obligation to advocate British arguments is unknown.

fundamental regional objectives, including continued viability and existence of British and American oil operations. The Ambassador also emphasised avoiding a “prolonged [Anglo-Saudi] wrangle,” since protracted conflict pitted the West squarely against Arab nationalism. He went so far as to suggest resuming arbitration—which American officials preferred—although such a notion was quite unpopular in Whitehall at that time.¹⁵⁸ When Washington proffered such a recommendation a few days later, Shuckburgh, who remained upset at Dulles’ refusal to back British positions fully at the United Nations, dismissed it as “thoroughly unsatisfactory.” Shuckburgh also resented persistent American unwillingness limit Saudi income. Eden exhibited similar disgust.¹⁵⁹

Throughout November, the Foreign Office attempted several devices to swing Washington from its impartiality to outright support for Britain. A particularly vigorous effort emphasised material Levy soldiers had seized in and around Buraimi. Through a meticulous winnowing process, Britain hoped to present to the State Department evidence of Saudi malpractices, seeking to jolt Eisenhower and Dulles out of their “extremely unsatisfactory attitudes.” In particular, the Foreign Office wanted Washington to abandon its idea of renewed arbitration.¹⁶⁰ British officials perceived their United States counterparts had “adopted the favorite Saudi line that Bullard’s resignation was engineered by us”; that line—which of course contained elements of truth—probably meant more American pressure to resume judicial procedures, they feared.¹⁶¹ Britain had

¹⁵⁸ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 27 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/27G.

¹⁵⁹ FO Memorandum, 6 December 1955; A. Eden Minute, 7 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1028G. See also *Descent*, 6 December 1955, p. 308, in which Shuckburgh labels American attitudes as “very unsatisfactory.” This Foreign Office memorandum and Shuckburgh’s diary entry both refer to Dulles’ 5 December 1955 cable (*FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 434), in which he reviewed the “urgent need” for Eastern Arabian solutions, and suggested Britain resume of some form of judicial solution, perhaps arbitration.

¹⁶⁰ FO Memorandum, 29 November 1955; J.L. Simpson Minute, 6 December 1955; D.M.H. Riches Minute, 9 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114631 EA1081/558; I. Lucas, p. 43. As confiscated documents contained information “helpful, innocuous, and harmful” to British arguments, careful winnowing was essential so that information from the latter category would remain classified.

¹⁶¹ H. Caccia to P. Dixon, 21 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114628 EA1081/492.

summarily rejected a number of recent Saudi proposals for settling boundary controversies through arbitration, and contemplated no change in its policy.¹⁶²

A related component of British efforts to strengthen post-*Bonaparte* politico-legal positions was a drive to secure public Muscati and Abu Dhabi approbation for this campaign. Although it was not exactly true that *Bonaparte* had flowed from client preferences, nor reflected their specific military and political inclinations, a convincing argument that Said and Shakhbut masterminded these military operations cast British actions in a better light. After all, Britain claimed to act purely on behalf of these leaders.¹⁶³ The Foreign Office therefore initiated successful efforts to obtain public statements of this sort, supporting *Bonaparte*.¹⁶⁴ This success did not prevent the Arab League Political Committee from strongly denouncing Britain in mid-November for unilaterally violating the arbitration agreement. This Committee also condemned British use of force, gave full support to Saudi Arabia, and suggested Britain return immediately to arbitration, in a spirit of peace and justice.¹⁶⁵

These setbacks, while damaging, carried less danger for British interests than continued American opposition. The United States and Britain collided over Buraimi not only at the governmental level, but among commercial echelons as well. A few days after *Bonaparte* ended, Terry Duce and several other high-ranking ARAMCO executives met with British Petroleum Attaché J.H. Brook. Duce and Brook argued about British actions in Eastern Arabia; Duce questioned the circumstances surrounding Bullard's resignation

¹⁶² J.F. Dulles to US Embassy London, 23 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 191 outlined Saudi proposals to Britain for resuming arbitration; Riyadh also suggested formation of a 'neutral committee' to oversee affairs at Buraimi. British leaders rejected these overtures ten days after Saudi representatives offered them. See also the *Times*, 25 November 1955, p. 10.

¹⁶³ PRPG to FO, 1 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114620 EA1081/242 has evidence that British leaders, not their clients, had primary responsibility for initiating, developing, and executing *Bonaparte*. See also Wilkinson, *Frontiers*, p. xxi.

¹⁶⁴ UK Embassy Beirut to FO, 27 October 1955, FO Memorandum, 28 October 1955; PRO FO 371/114623 EA1081/347; *ST*, 6 November 1955, p. 9.

¹⁶⁵ FO Memorandum, 14 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114628 discusses Political Committee decisions.

and the tribunal's dissolution. He also denigrated Britain's failure to consult with Washington before embarking on military operations, and recommended Britain reinstitute arbitration and return to Saudi Arabia all the territorial gains *Bonaparte* had netted. Brook categorically rejected these allegations and recommendations.¹⁶⁶

Duce's suggestion, like those of the State Department, played poorly in London as well. The Foreign Office amplified Brook's disapproval of ARAMCO plans, branding them "totally unrealistic" because they did not address Saudi "greed and irresponsibility." Apparent ARAMCO failure to acknowledge Saudi misbehaviour before and during the arbitration agreement constituted another sore spot.¹⁶⁷ British leaders equated "monstrous [ARAMCO] attitudes" with State Department policies, concluding the former acted as *eminence grise* in official Washington circles.¹⁶⁸ Additional Anglo-ARAMCO squabbling soon erupted, when ARAMCO executives once again condemned British abandonment of arbitration. ARAMCO insisted dissolution of the existing tribunal, and its replacement with an entirely new one, rather than using force, represented appropriate procedures. This sentiment stood completely at variance with Foreign Office attitudes, and British diplomats in Saudi Arabia again dismissed ARAMCO perspectives as unrealistic. They also upbraided ARAMCO for continuing to survey in sensitive border areas despite the obviously provocative implications of such activity.¹⁶⁹

Similarly to tense Anglo-ARAMCO interaction, Anglo-Saudi relations showed severe strain as well. British authorities suffered a mid-November scare when Saudi Arabia appeared to be on the brink of launching a military expedition to re-establish its presence at Buraimi. Although Saudi forces would not have been large, the danger of any

¹⁶⁶ UK Petroleum Attaché J.H. Brook to FO, 31 October 1955, PRO FO 371/114628 EA1081/488.

¹⁶⁷ FO to UK Embassy Washington, 16 November 1955, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ C. Belgrave Minute, 9 November 1955; I. Samuel Minute, 10 November 1955, *ibid.* AGI and RBI both assert that ARAMCO exerted little to no influence on official American policies at any level.

setback amplified such a threat to dramatic levels. The Chiefs of Staff concluded Britain had to counter any enemy thrust immediately, since Eastern Arabia possessed such “immense economic and political importance.” British forces must check Saudi forays at all costs, because any enemy gains—territorial or political—would prove “most damaging to Britain’s national cause.”¹⁷⁰

Despite suggestions from British diplomats in Jeddah that probabilities of an “orthodox [Saudi] attack” against Buraimi were “remote”—they thought Saudi commando operations to be much more likely—General Headquarters Middle East Land Forces developed contingency plans for thwarting large-scale Saudi offensive operations, using a combination of air and ground forces. In the event of a Saudi attack, this scheme entailed phased withdrawal of British and allied ground troops from Riyadh Line forward positions. As enemy forces pursued retreating defenders across vast Eastern Arabian deserts, British aircraft would bomb and strafe Saudi columns; lack of concealment and cover improved the prospects for offensive airpower. After this aerial attack ran its course, British ground forces would end their withdrawal, and counter-attack, seeking to “deal [Saudi Arabia] a knockout blow.”¹⁷¹ In conjunction with this scheme, British military leaders planned to increase the size and strength of Trucial Levy detachments which patrolled new Eastern Arabian boundaries.¹⁷² Bolstering Britain’s presence along these boundaries assisted in deterring Riyadh from any precipitate military operations, and, if deterrence failed, enhanced intelligence capabilities by supplying a more accurate

¹⁶⁹ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 15 December 1955; FO Minute, 22 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114633 EA1081/587.

¹⁷⁰ COSC Confidential Annex, COS (55) 95th Meeting, 21 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/539.

¹⁷¹ GHQMEF Minute, 28 November 1955, *ibid.*; Embassy Jeddah to FO, 28 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109.

¹⁷² LDCPG Memorandum, 21 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/542G.

picture regarding the size, strength, and disposition of any Saudi manoeuvres east of post-*Bonaparte* frontiers.

Tensions rose to such heights along this disputed boundary that Burrows sought to expand IPC's already-considerable role in official British activities. He requested a consignment of weaponry, which he intended to disburse to IPC workers. In the event of Anglo-Saudi hostilities, Burrows wanted these civilian employees to participate. Since he recognised their lack of training, experience, and firepower limited them to a defensive role, he thought these workers might contribute by protecting British oil installations.¹⁷³

Burrows' prediction of imminent Anglo-Saudi conflict did not materialise, but Dulles fretted nonetheless. Although Anglo-Saudi relations had not necessarily deteriorated since *Bonaparte*, they had certainly not improved, either. He dispatched a new round of diplomatic notes, informing British leaders of his interest in resuming arbitration or some other bilateral judicial arrangements. He wanted to avoid an "explosion" in the Arabian Peninsula, and thought additional British procrastination might prompt ugly exchanges of Anglo-Saudi "charge and counter-charge," to the detriment of Western regional positions. Dulles warned British belligerence would benefit Moscow by awakening hostile feelings throughout the Arab world.¹⁷⁴

Perhaps as a result of these exhortations, Macmillan in late November notified Dulles of his intention to start a new, cooperative Anglo-American phase in the Middle East, particularly regarding Saudi Arabia. He expressed interest in discussing Eastern Arabian boundary disputes frankly and in a spirit of compromise.¹⁷⁵ Macmillan reinforced this apparently cooperative approach during early-December conversations

¹⁷³ PRPG to FO, 24 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/531. The Foreign Office refused Burrows' request. Apparently, concern over weaponry in untrained hands prompted this decision.

¹⁷⁴ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy London, 23 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 191.

with American diplomats in London.¹⁷⁶ Dulles responded warmly, remarking Buraimi required “urgent solutions,” probably through resumption of arbitration. Unbeknownst to the American Secretary of State, however, were ongoing British preparations for final consolidation of its Eastern Arabian positions: subjugation of the Imam of Oman. Dulles was also unaware of the precise dimensions of this ‘cooperative approach.’ No doubt he envisaged a return to arbitration or some other legal solution, but Macmillan had in mind something a little more drastic: a coup d’etat in Riyadh. He suggested to Eden that coordinated “Anglo-U[nited] S[tates] action could upset [overthrow] King Saud and remove this canker.”¹⁷⁷

An Anglo-Muscati ‘Grand Design’ in Oman

Although a detailed analysis of the relationship between Imam and Sultan in the territories of Muscat and Oman lay beyond the scope of this study, a brief summary of relations between these rulers is in order.¹⁷⁸ While the Sultan traditionally exerted sovereignty along coastal areas, in rugged Omani hinterlands the Imam exercised a high degree of religious and political autonomy, and in fact enjoyed significant independent authority. On 25 September 1920, after a series of successful campaigns against Sultanate sovereignty,¹⁷⁹ Omani tribes forced the Sultan’s acquiescence in the Sib Treaty, which codified an ambiguous *modus vivendi*: Jebel Akhdar—a high, desolate plateau approximately two hundred square miles in area—effectively delineated Muscat’s

¹⁷⁵ H. Macmillan to J.F. Dulles, 25 November 1955, and J.F. Dulles to H. Macmillan, 5 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 192, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 83, and *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 434. These dispatches appear in each of the listed sources, although form varies slightly from source to source.

¹⁷⁶ Memcon: H. Macmillan and W. Aldrich, 7 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 197; PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/4.

¹⁷⁷ H. Macmillan Memorandum, 25 November 1955, PRO FO 371/115532 PM/55/172.

¹⁷⁸ Wilkinson, *Tradition*, pp. 249-315 has by far the best account of 20th Century relations between Omani Imamate and Muscati Sultanate.

¹⁷⁹ Rentz, pp. 48-58.

western political limits.¹⁸⁰ In keeping with a century of tradition, London pursued strict non-involvement regarding affairs in these hinterlands.¹⁸¹ For decades thereafter, Sultan and Imam respected a relatively peaceful, although uneasy, coexistence, each implicitly recognising the other's sphere of influence: Muscati authority did not exist beyond a narrow coastal strip, while Imamate power predominated in Jebel Akhdar and beyond.¹⁸²

That arrangement shifted in the late 1940s, thus increasing the frequency of armed violence between these two factions.¹⁸³ At London's urging, and with assistance from indefatigable desert explorer and British operative Wilfred Thesiger and direct IPC support via massive financial 'subsidies,' Sultan Said's claims expanded significantly westward, while, for a number of reasons, Imam Muhammad al Khalili began a halting drift toward alignment with Saudi Arabia, not least due to fear over growing Muscati territorial ambitions. Said justified his expansion by alleging that since he had not signed the Sib Treaty (having assumed power after his father's 1932 abdication), its provisions did not bind him.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ DOS Memorandum, 13 January 1956, USNA RG 59 786E.00/1-1356 and PRO FO 371/91262 EA1017/2 contain the Sib Treaty's text. For a published version, see Peterson, pp. 174-75.

¹⁸¹ Thesiger, pp. 7, 271, 273; Wilkinson, *Tradition*, p. 313.

¹⁸² A 1948 IPC survey noted that Said "has not established authority" beyond the Muscati coast, particularly in Oman, where a triumvirate of tribal chiefs (including the Imam) held sway and "must therefore be treated effectively as independents." *IPC Handbook*, pp. 72-73.

¹⁸³ *Descent*, 8 July 1955, p. 267 demonstrates that by 1955 relations between Imam and Sultan had basically degenerated to open warfare, after years of steady deterioration.

¹⁸⁴ R.E. Bird Memorandum, 5 March 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E6053, FO Minute, 19 March 1949, PRO FO 371/74973 E3597, T. Rogers Minute, 9 April 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E4046, M. Nuttall Memorandum, 5 May 1949, PRO FO 371/75018 E6011, T. Duce to F. Wilkins, 10 July 1950, USNA RG 59 786E.022/7-1050, and PRPG to FO, 14 April 1951, PRO FO 371/91262 EA1017/6 outline British efforts to "persuade [Said] to extend his authority" over backcountry Oman, and describe IPC expeditions into Oman. FO to PAM, 20 October 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E12657/G and PRPG to FO, 28 October 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E13582G describe Thesiger's covert role. So eager was Britain to secure IPC concessions that the Foreign Office sent Thesiger on backcountry reconnaissance, despite knowledge that Sultan Said opposed these missions. See also Joyce, *Sultanate*, p. 53. Peripatetic IPC employee and British agent Henderson personally spearheaded distribution of financial largesse to win tribal loyalties for Sultan Said; he recalls dispersing "large sealed envelopes full of [IPC] money" to local potentates (Henderson, p. 110). See also Wilkinson, *Tradition*, p. 284, Kelly, *Sultanate*, p. 14, and Joyce, *Sultanate*, p. 51. Because of religious differences, Imam Khalili had serious reservations about direct alliance with Saudi Arabia. Many of his followers had no such qualms, however, and openly espoused a link with Riyadh. Kelly, *Sultanate*, p. 16 describes Said's denunciation of the Sib Treaty.

Essentially, by the early 1950s a race had developed, to see who could establish decisive preponderance over Oman first, Said or al Khalili. Britain backed the Sultan, because his success in this contest would accelerate IPC petroleum extraction in backcountry Oman. As one Foreign Office authority observed, “facilitation of oil operations probably represents our greatest advantage from extending influence.”¹⁸⁵ In contrast to British authorities, however, Said opposed forceful methods for establishing Muscati authority where it had not existed previously. Instead, he advocated more nuanced measures, such as political and financial campaigns to win tribal loyalties. Said also hoped al Khalili’s death would trigger Imamate dissolution, thereby allowing for absorption of Oman with minimal strife.¹⁸⁶

These ambitions suffered a serious setback when al Khalili died in late spring 1954. Far from catalysing a peaceful annexation, this event demonstrated a palpable lack of Muscati backcountry influence. New Omani Imam Ghalib bin Ali al-Hinai, and Ghalib’s brother Talib, moved quickly to secure full independence for Oman.¹⁸⁷ A spate of recent IPC adventures into traditional Imamate zones of influence, including the so-called ‘Expedition D.E.F.’, showed Ghalib and Talib the necessity of moving with alacrity if they hoped to avoid an Anglo-Muscati *fait accompli* in which Sultanate authority overspread Oman. To this end, they initiated full-scale hostilities against Said and his IPC allies, while moving toward an explicit alliance with Riyadh.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ FO Memorandum, 9 March 1951, PRO FO 371/91262 EA1017/3. This document also laments Said’s “possibly hollow [territorial] claims” and “purely nominal sovereignty” beyond coastal Muscat.

¹⁸⁶ Joyce, *Sultanate*, p. 49.

¹⁸⁷ US Consulate Dhahran to DOS, 29 January 1955, USNA RG 59 786E.00/1-2955. Innes, p. 73, provides an interesting, though medically questionable, post-mortem for the Imam, alleging that al Khalili died of a broken heart, since London had not allowed Muscati and Omani forces to attack Turki bin Ataishan in 1952. He had, in fact, suffered serious illness for several years, and was bedridden during much of the ‘Turki affair.’

¹⁸⁸ FO Memorandum: “Nizwah,” 14 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109 asserts that “IPC’s discovery of oil in central Oman [has] cause[d] present troubles.” See also Peterson, and I. Lucas, p. 44. Henderson, pp. 80, 93, 108, 123-25, 128, 130 describes IPC explorations into Imamate territory, and subsequent struggles between Ghalib and Said (and his IPC allies, who played a major role in these skirmishes). See also US

Possibilities of a Saudi-Omani coalition linking Muscat's two primary adversaries, particularly if this alliance enabled Ghalib to secure full political independence, troubled Said, IPC, and Britain. Prospects for tremendous new backcountry oil discoveries—notably in the Fahud region of Oman—exuded real appeal. But Omani independence might enable ARAMCO to secure concessionary privileges, thus consummating what had been a topic of "considerable gloom" for Britain for years.¹⁸⁹ All three actors (Said, IPC, Britain) therefore favoured curtailing, and possibly eliminating, Imamate support bases, thereby simultaneously eradicating threats and expanding Muscati and British financial opportunities. As outlined above, IPC and British officials had long urged Said to extend his authority across not only Muscat but all Oman as well, and this quest assumed new urgency once Ghalib became Imam. Said, while preferring 'political' campaigns to methods of straight force, nevertheless acquiesced to some degree with British plans for a direct attack on Oman.¹⁹⁰

In early 1955, Brigadier Robert Baird, senior British military authority in the Persian Gulf, proposed Said double Muscati military strength in preparation for assaults against Oman; London subsequently provided 150,000 pounds to underwrite MOFF augmentation. IPC also offered significant financial resources to subsidise this reinforcement.¹⁹¹ As one scholar notes, "If [Ghalib] would not allow IPC access to his

Consulate Dhahran to DOS, 11 May 1954, USNA RG 54 886E.2553/5-1154; Wilkinson, *Tradition*, pp. 297, 320; Mann, pp. 56, 87.

¹⁸⁹ R.E. Bird Memorandum, 14 March 1949, PRO FO 371/74973 E3597; M. Nuttall Memorandum, 5 May 1949, PRO FO 75018 E6011; FO to PAM, 20 October 1949, PRO FO 371/75020 E12657/G. See also Longrigg, p. 318 for an IPC insider's view on the undesirability of Omani independence.

¹⁹⁰ DOS Intelligence Report: "The Oman Conflict", 8 August 1957, USNA RG 59 Document Series C-0059; FO Memorandum, 8 June 1949, PRO FO 371/74960 (cited in full in Burrows, Annex I). Eickelman states that in September 1955, Said abandoned his 'gradualist approach' for annexing Oman. However, much evidence indicates he clung to such a strategy until early December, when British pressure became overwhelming.

¹⁹¹ FO Memorandum, 14 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109; Thesiger, p. 7; Heard-Bey, pp. 299-300, 305; Burrows, pp. 97, 114; Innes, pp. 93, 134; *Times*, 19 December 1955.

lands, then they had to checkmate him.”¹⁹² Macmillan informed Eden in mid-November 1955, “Ghalib’s sphere of influence is uncomfortably close to Jebel Fahud, where IPC is about to drill into a highly promising structure.”¹⁹³ Successful Anglo-Muscati military operations, in combination with *Bonaparte*, would allow British clients Said and Shakhbut to enjoy absolute Eastern Arabian supremacy, unhindered by Saudi territorial claims, rival oil company interference, or Imamate pretensions.¹⁹⁴

Precisely when Whitehall began preparations for cutting Ghalib down to size—its so-called ‘grand design’ scheme—is unclear, although planning had matured by Spring 1955.¹⁹⁵ Britain assigned to Said preponderant campaign responsibility, while allocating various forms of assistance, such as financial, logistic, reconnaissance, and intelligence support. At Eden’s insistence, British troops who deployed to Sharjah in accordance with *Bonaparte* remained in theatre to support Muscati operations in Oman, instead of returning to their permanent stations, as the Defence Ministry and Chiefs of Staffs recommended.¹⁹⁶ RAF Lincolns and Venoms operating from Iraqi bases had responsibility to provide ‘grand design’ air support. The Foreign Office also stipulated a major role for British advisors.¹⁹⁷

Immediately after *Bonaparte* concluded, Baird met with IPC representatives and the Sultan to arrange an attack on Ghalib, and on November 7th, Burrows informed Said

¹⁹² Wilkinson, *Tradition*, p. 274.

¹⁹³ H. Macmillan to A. Eden, 17 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109.

¹⁹⁴ *Descent*, 8 December 1955, p. 309 discusses an explicit link between *Bonaparte* and the Anglo-Muscati ‘grand design.’ See also FO Memorandum, 14 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/523. Shuckburgh perceived *Bonaparte* as a way to destroy all links between Saudi money and Imamate political power; regional forces aligned with Britain could then dispose of Ghalib and Talib at their leisure. Other British documents make similar arguments. See also Eickelman.

¹⁹⁵ Innes, p. 136. Shuckburgh discussed facets of the ‘grand design’ with Said in July 1955, when the Sultan visited London (*Descent*, 6 & 7 July 1955, pp. 265, 267). I. Lucas, p. 44 suggests that Said’s decision to overwhelm Ghalib came only after *Bonaparte* had run its course, but most evidence suggests otherwise.

¹⁹⁶ A. Eden to A. Head, 9 November 1955; MOD to GHQMELF, 10 November 1955; N.C.D. Brownjohn Memorandum, 14 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109.

¹⁹⁷ FO Memorandum, 14 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109. Shuckburgh had responsibility for getting various Britons into Muscat in support of Omani operations, and placed great importance on this effort; see *Descent*, 30 November 1955 and 7 December 1955, pp. 306 & 308.

in writing that he should begin immediate offensive preparations. Despite the Sultan's apparent preference for slow and cautious tactics emphasising political considerations rather than outright force, Burrows urged him to commence military planning "with the greatest possible speed."¹⁹⁸ IPC agreed to transport participating allied forces, including MOFF and Trucial Levy formations, and also offered to provide communications support for Muscati offensives.¹⁹⁹ Although Macmillan predicted operations in Oman "will almost certainly involve us in strong [Arab] criticism," he assessed the potential wealth at stake to surpass any such drawbacks.²⁰⁰ Therefore, he gave the 'grand design' his unqualified support, a stance with which Eden concurred.²⁰¹

When in late November Macmillan offered a Cabinet proposal suggesting Anglo-Muscati military operations, Ministers provided full approval. Despite earlier Parliamentary assurances that strict consultation and coordination with American authorities would now underpin British regional activities, the Cabinet decided providing Washington with a 'warning interval' was probably not a worthwhile course of action.²⁰² Ministers based this questionable decision on an assumption that American officials had little interest in Omani hostilities because, unlike Buraimi, this dispute had no bearing on American oil interests.²⁰³

That they could articulate such an astonishing assumption shows the degree to which London and Washington talked past each other, rather than engaging in

¹⁹⁸ PRPG to FO, 22 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109.

¹⁹⁹ PRPG to FO, 4 & 8 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109. Brown, pp. 211-13, suggests that ARAMCO assisted in Ghalib's reconnaissance efforts prior to the Muscati offensive in December 1955. His explanation for this alleged support—that ARAMCO feared ramifications from "the precedent created by Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal"—is wholly inadequate, since Egypt did not nationalise Suez until July 1956, eight months *after* the events in question.

²⁰⁰ H. Macmillan to A. Eden, 17 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109.

²⁰¹ Macmillan, p. 641.

²⁰² Parliamentary assurances came in Macmillan's answer to a 5 November 1955 Supplementary Question from Emmanuel Shinwell (see note 91 *supra*) who, in clear reference to Persian Gulf policy, asked, "Are we in consultation with the Americans now?" Macmillan responded affirmatively. (PRO FO 371/114629 EA1081/500)

meaningful dialogue. By far the most prominent feature of American criticism regarding British operations at Buraimi was that resorting to military force would accentuate Soviet subversion by alienating Arab public opinion from the West. Immediately after *Bonaparte*, Hoover made a special point of highlighting this fundamental belief during his conversations with Makins.²⁰⁴ What he did *not* emphasise to any appreciable extent was a desire for selfish custody of American oil interests. In a separate conversation with Makins, George Allen even revealed State Department preferences that Gulf sheikhdoms, rather than Saudi Arabia, control the bulk of disputed-area oil deposits.²⁰⁵ So, if anything, petroleum issues compelled Washington to *oppose* Riyadh in its territorial struggles against Britain.

Why, then, did Eden and Macmillan allege oil considerations enjoyed primacy in formulation of American policy? Several possibilities exist. Perhaps Macmillan and his Foreign Office subordinates simply did not believe United States authorities, and thought immediate oil access formed Dulles' pre-eminent concern, despite sparse American discussion of this topic. British leaders may have projected their own petroleum fixation onto the State Department, assuming American thoughts mirrored their own. But if British officials did not accept the sincerity of State Department concerns over long-term Soviet Middle Eastern penetration, why did they spend so much time rebutting American arguments? Of special importance was an oft-repeated British argument that Riyadh already embraced hopelessly anti-Western attitudes, including either explicit or implicit

²⁰³ PRO CAB 128 (55) 43rd Conclusions, 24 November 1955; Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 129; H. Macmillan to A. Eden, 17 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109.

²⁰⁴ "Hoover asked me to draw your particular attention to the second sentence of the [American] memo[randum] since it made a point to which the State Department attached much weight," reported Makins in his dispatch to London, 3 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114626 EA1081/432. The second sentence elaborated American fears about *Bonaparte* contributing to growing Soviet opportunities in the Arabian Peninsula. On one occasion Dulles did remark to Macmillan that "we have large oil interests" in Saudi Arabia, but extensive State Department commentary soon superseded these extemporaneous musings. (Memcon: J.F. Dulles and H. Macmillan, 26 October 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 358).

alignment with Moscow; therefore the United States should have no qualms about ‘writing off’ Saudi Arabia. One doubts such an exhaustive British expenditure of breath and ink developing this theme had Britain perceived American concerns about Saudi alignment as anything but genuine.

More likely, therefore, is a hypothesis that Ministers, with Eden probably in the lead, glossed over American concerns and embarked on a policy of secrecy to bypass State Department opposition. As *Times* Middle East Correspondent James Morris—who accompanied Said on his campaign to subjugate Ghalib—observed, “...the need for joint Anglo-American policy toward the Arabs seemed to Britain less important than the need for oil resources in stable, friendly territory.”²⁰⁶ Just as had been the case during preparations for *Bonaparte*, and would be the case during planning for British offensives at Suez nine months later, Eden and his Cabinet *anticipated an American attempt to dissuade Britain from its contemplated course of action.*

Such dilatory efforts could only complicate issues for London, particularly since Eden and Macmillan perceived any modifications in ‘grand design’ operational timetables to be extremely dangerous. They worried that, in the event of additional delays, Ghalib or Saudi Arabia might become alerted to ongoing Anglo-Muscati preparations, and adjust accordingly.²⁰⁷ Indeed, some indications soon revealed Ghalib’s suspicion of imminent military operations.²⁰⁸ A *fait accompli* strategy of keeping Washington uninformed, and pressing for exculpation after British policy reached an

²⁰⁵ UK Embassy Washington to FO, 8 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114627 EA1081/460 contains Allen’s admission.

²⁰⁶ J. Morris, p. 27.

²⁰⁷ MOD to GHQMELF, 18 November 1955; GHQMELF to MOD; A. Eden to H. Macmillan, 19 November 1955; FO to PRPG, 21 November 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109.

²⁰⁸ *Times*, 29 November 1955, p. 8.

irreversible stage, not only seemed much easier, but more conducive to military success as well.²⁰⁹

In early December, Said's political campaign against Imamate power in Oman appeared to succeed to such an extent that British officials thought he might establish control there without a fight. Although Burrows feared continued Muscati progress on this front might compel further operational delays—thereby scotching British ambitions for irrevocable Imamate destruction—such success did offer the advantage of rendering irrelevant British 'warning interval' dilemmas.²¹⁰ Optimism on this count proved illusory.²¹¹ Therefore, in accordance with earlier Anglo-Muscati planning, RAF aircraft overflew Imamate strongholds at Nizwa and Rustaq; the Sultan moved 350 MOFF troops and their eight British officers into Oman soon thereafter, while simultaneously deploying Trucial Levies in reserve.²¹² MOFF, which had excellent mobility by virtue of its 40 Land Rovers, met no resistance. These military operations proved quick and successful. Ghalib jumped out a back window at Nizwa and fled under cover of darkness.²¹³ (See Map Four) His ignominious retreat ended only when he reached Jebel Akhdar, whose rugged terrain proved temporarily beyond the Sultan's reach.²¹⁴ This setback, in tandem with his earlier failure to hold Ibri²¹⁵ and Dhank, meant Ghalib had obviously suffered a devastating defeat.²¹⁶ Talib left Oman entirely and sought refuge in Saudi Arabia.²¹⁷

²⁰⁹ Burrows, p. 113, notes Cabinet fears regarding State Department 'leaks' to Saudi Arabia concerning Anglo-Muscati military operations in Oman.

²¹⁰ PRPG to FO, 1 December 1955, PRO DEFE 11/109.

²¹¹ *Descent*, 8 December 1955, p. 309.

²¹² Memcon: J. Carrigan and B. Burrows, 17 December 1955, USNA RG 59 786E.00/12-1755; Innes, p. 143.

²¹³ J. Morris, pp. 27-28, 47, 67; Mann, p. 87; Lenczowski, p. 149.

²¹⁴ *Descent*, 15 December 1955, p. 311; *Economist*, 31 December 1955, p. 1182. British special forces successfully attacked the Imam's mountain fastness in 1957 and 1958.

²¹⁵ US Consulate Dhahran to DOS, 29 January 1955, USNA RG 59 786E.00/1-2955.

²¹⁶ US Consulate Dhahran to DOS, 26 November 1955, USNA RG 59 786E.00/11-2655; *Times*, 16 December 1955, pp. 7-8. A decade later, the UN General Assembly passed resolutions essentially

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of Eastern Arabia***

On December 12th, simultaneous with American intelligence reports describing an imminent Anglo-Muscati campaign against Ghalib, Eden reversed his earlier ‘warning interval’ ban. The relationship between these two events remains unclear, but in any event, British authorities warned American officials immediately *before* MOFF troops entered Oman, rather than waiting until the ‘grand design’ had run its course.²¹⁸ Kirkpatrick notified United States Minister Evan Wilson of these imminent backcountry operations; Wilson in turn informed Washington.

Dulles quickly dispatched notes to London, requesting an immediate cease-fire to end “[these] most serious [Eastern Arabian] developments.” He justified his entreaty on several counts. First and foremost, he feared ongoing American efforts to keep Saudi Arabia from taking “more vigorous action” over *Bonaparte* might collapse. By attacking Ghalib, Dulles thought, Muscat and Britain provided Riyadh with additional incentive to make an immediate Security Council appeal, or perhaps even align with Moscow. He deprecated in very strong terms British failure to provide American authorities with meaningful advance notification, and noted that had London provided such warning, he and Eisenhower would have recommended Said and MOFF forbear from executing their ‘grand design.’ He also mentioned Ghalib’s ambiguous legal status—for Washington, the extent of Imamate sovereignty and independence was an open question, but had enough basis in historical precedent as to preclude immediate and wholesale annihilation at

condemning Britain for its role in this campaign, and, among other things, called for complete British military withdrawal from Oman. (Kechichian, p. 44-46)

²¹⁷ DOS Memorandum, 1 August 1957, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 153.

²¹⁸ US Consulate Aden to DOS, 12 December 1955, USNA RG 59 786E.00/12-1255. PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/7 details British vacillation regarding a ‘warning interval,’ including exchanges between Makins and London, in which Makins laments his failure to receive information regarding last-minute Cabinet modifications. These alterations left him operating under errant, and potentially embarrassing, assumptions.

Said's hands. In fact, Dulles felt so strongly about ongoing hostilities that he informed Britain of his intention to appeal directly to Muscat, despite traditional American respect for British seigniory there.²¹⁹

Although his threatened intrusion on a British sphere was sufficient to provoke an unfavourable British reaction in its own right, his concurrent dispatch of strong suggestions that London return immediately to arbitration all but guaranteed an alliance bouleversement. Such a decision, he thought, constituted the best, and perhaps only, deterrent regarding a Saudi approach to the United Nations.²²⁰ This policy, of course, stood in direct opposition to Britain's favoured tactic for avoiding a Security Council struggle: unrelenting American pressure on Riyadh.

These tandem cables had an explosive effect in Whitehall. The Anglo-American partnership thus degenerated into a series of tense confrontations. Kirkpatrick and Shuckburgh displayed particular fury at Dulles' views.²²¹ Initial skirmishes in what became a fierce and bitter debate took place between Wilson and Foreign Office representatives, who took to task American attitudes, remarking Washington had "ignored...all British explanations" of the importance of British Eastern Arabian positions, thereby putting Washington and London on "entirely different planes" with respect to policy development and execution. Eastern Department representatives also castigated the United States for supporting a "treasonable Saudi puppet," while abandoning Muscat, a "loyal [Western] ally" whose actions were entirely legitimate.²²²

²¹⁹ DOS to US Embassy London, 13 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 145; PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/5.

²²⁰ DOS to US Embassy London, 13 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 197; PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/4. Petersen contends that Dulles wanted Britain to return to arbitration "because of [his] genuine fear that British oil companies would replace ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia."

²²¹ *Descent*, 14 December 1955, p. 311 asserts that American cables left Kirkpatrick "breathing fire." The Foreign Office characterised Dulles' memorandum as "panicky" and treated it scornfully (FO Memorandum: "American Views on Buraimi and Oman," 10 January 1956, PRO FO 371/120525 E1021/2). See also Ovendale, *Transfer*, p. 129.

²²² FO Memorandum, 14 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/5.

Furthermore, they asserted, anglophobe *Saudi* tendencies actually lay behind Ghalib's intransigence, suggesting Saudi weapons and money had played large roles in Omani military and political success in 1954 and 1955.²²³

Kirkpatrick soon expanded his offensive against United States attitudes with what he termed a "savage attack" against Walworth Barbour, a diplomat at the American Embassy in London.²²⁴ Kirkpatrick denounced Saudi leaders as pro-Soviet "pirates," while condemning United States policy as "mystifying, bewildering...[and] violat[ing] elementary concepts of justice," particularly in its support of Saudi Arabia's drive to "gobble up all Southeastern Arabian states." He also informed Barbour that selfish oil interests drove American regional attitudes, and averred that Washington had leagued with Moscow to back Saudi interests at British expense. Since American perspectives apropos ambiguous Imamate sovereignty particularly enraged Kirkpatrick, he delivered a lengthy manifesto on this theme, asserting any Western restraint on Muscati actions would inevitably destroy the Sultanate. For the United States to urge forbearance on Said was tantamount to "establishing a Saudi puppet" who might soon expand to include not only Oman, but Muscat as well. This new agglomeration would subsequently unite with Saudi Arabia. "Throwing [Muscat] to the wolves" to avoid annoying Riyadh was "entirely wrong." Barbour retorted by outlining Dulles' overall aversion to using force in international disputes, since any approach emphasising military solutions legitimised similar Soviet behaviour. Kirkpatrick attempted to undercut Barbour's argument by asking if the United States would oppose 'self-defensive' force if Communist China

²²³ DOS Memorandum, 1 August 1957, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 153. After investigating the extent of Saudi support in late 1955, State Department officials concluded that while some low-level gun-running had probably transpired, Riyadh provided no large-scale arms deliveries to Ghalib or Talib. Whether British or American estimates contain greater accuracy is unknown.

²²⁴ I. Kirkpatrick to C.A.E. Shuckburgh, 15 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/6.

invaded Taiwan, or if one Central American country attacked another, but Barbour dismissed these analogies as irrelevant, and the two men broke off their confrontation.²²⁵

Kirkpatrick's later memoranda illustrate his outrage was not merely a passing phase of discontent with United States perspectives. Instead, he held deep misgivings about "irrational, disturbing, annoying, and ignorant" American attitudes toward Saudi Arabia and "willful blindness" regarding important British Persian Gulf positions. Kirkpatrick despised the "strange, dangerous, and novel" American aversion to force, and doubted whether Dulles and his staff even knew basic tenets of Arabian geography. Moreover, he viewed with disgust what he perceived to be ARAMCO influence on the State Department.²²⁶

British and American diplomats also sparred in both the United States and Saudi Arabia. R.W. Bailey of the British Embassy in Washington bickered with State Department officials, who informed him British support of the Sultan threatened to compel Saudi Arabia to abandon its hitherto moderate stance over Buraimi, and adopt rash new anti-Western policies. Bailey's analysis of this conversation established the precept that the White House had deliberately exploited Omani controversies to compel "some [British] retreat," thus restoring Saudi pride.²²⁷

Another skirmish erupted in Jeddah, when American Ambassador Wadsworth met British Ambassador R.W. Parkes. Wadsworth informed Parkes of his displeasure at recent British actions in Eastern Arabia, which threatened to push King Saud away from

²²⁵ FO to UK Embassy Washington, 15 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/4, and I. Kirkpatrick Memorandum, 18 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/6 contain Kirkpatrick's account of this conversation. Barbour's version is in *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 146. Perusing these records gives the impression that Kirkpatrick and Barbour nearly came to blows. Shuckburgh endorsed Kirkpatrick's "sharp attack"; see *Descent*, 15 December 1955, p. 311.

²²⁶ See, for example, I. Kirkpatrick to Embassy Washington, 17 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/6, fascinating as much for its emotional tone as for its content. Anger at ARAMCO for its perceived 'meddling' in Arabian affairs was a consistent theme of British political endeavour in the 1950s; see, for instance, FO Memorandum, 7 November 1955, PRO FO 371/114626 EA1081/432.

his cautious and limited pro-Western orientation, and into a Soviet embrace. Wadsworth thought the biggest danger of military operations was their inherent threat to Middle Eastern stability. Chaos could only benefit Moscow, and also heightened possibilities of dangerous escalation in long-simmering Anglo-Saudi tensions. His greatest fear envisaged a collision of Saudi tribesmen and British troops, resulting in direct combat. British forces, with their superior firepower and technology, would of course win such an engagement, but the long-term effect would be surging anti-Western sentiment, not only in Saudi Arabia but throughout the Arab world. Offering King Saud some way of saving face, Wadsworth informed Parkes, represented the best way to offset such an outcome. Parkes disagreed. In his dispatch to London, he dismissed Wadsworth's dictums as "emotional and egoistic poppycock" articulated in hopes of inducing British diplomats to send alarmist reports back to London. Parkes thought Washington and London need not worry about Riyadh's orientation, because the West could depend on Egypt and Syria to keep "medieval and fundamentally rotten" Saudi Arabia from turning to the Soviet Union. The Foreign Office agreed with Parkes' analysis, despite close ties between Cairo, Damascus, and Moscow.²²⁸

The culminating engagements in this Anglo-American running battle over Oman came at Paris, where high-level delegations from both countries met in conjunction with a North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting. Shuckburgh, anticipating a clash between Macmillan and Dulles at this summit, prepared an extensive brief for his Foreign Secretary, outlining differences between respective Anglo-American positions, as well as elaborating the inadequacies of "disappointing and disquieting" United States attitudes and the correctness of British perspectives. An exposition of this sort could, perhaps,

²²⁷ Memcon: F. Wilkins, R. Bailey, W. Morris, 13 December 1955, USNA RG 59 786E.00/12-1355; UK Embassy Washington to FO, 15 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/7.

enable Britain to sidestep Dulles' messages urging cessation of hostilities and returning to arbitration. Shuckburgh suggested that Macmillan describe for American officials what Whitehall perceived as remaining components of Western regional strength, and attempt to persuade Dulles to commit the United States in defence of these elements. In this formulation, economic considerations dictated Britain's framework of special arrangements with its Gulf clients represented the *most important* Western position. Under no circumstances could London allow Saudi Arabia to gain Eastern Arabian footholds; a "serious breach in [Anglo-American] unity" would inevitably result if Dulles did not fall into line behind British strategy, Shuckburgh noted, because the Foreign Office was unwilling to compromise in any way on this issue.²²⁹

Shuckburgh then proceeded down another tangent, seemingly at variance with his first group of arguments. He counseled Macmillan to deny oil played any role in British activities in Eastern Arabia; instead, the "grounds of highest policy, regardless of commercial or other considerations" had compelled London to act forcefully, and should similarly underpin American attitudes. This assertion apparently contradicts Shuckburgh's firm conviction that "essential economic advantages" made the Persian Gulf a critical Middle Eastern position.²³⁰

Shuckburgh also suggested Macmillan emphasise the dangers of Saudi regional influence, in an attempt to carry through ongoing British efforts to restrict Riyadh's financial capabilities. Dulles should learn, in no uncertain terms, that Saudi Arabia "play[ed] the communist game on every major issue throughout the area," and its

²²⁸ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 15 December 1955; D.M.H. Riches Minute, 6 January 1956, PRO FO 371/114633 EA1081/593.

²²⁹ C.A.E. Shuckburgh Memorandum: "Note for Use in Dulles Conversation," 14 December 1955, PRO FO 371/115469 V1023/30G.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

expenditures drove ongoing “Middle Eastern Bolshev[ation].” Reduction or interdiction of Saudi income represented the only way to halt this trend, Shuckburgh thought.²³¹

Before Macmillan could tackle Dulles, Shuckburgh clashed with Francis Russell, his State Department counterpart, who deplored British tendencies to “act without due consideration for American interests.” Unlike the multitude of other acrimonious Anglo-American collisions over hostilities in Oman, something positive actually emerged from this encounter. Shuckburgh and Russell agreed that divergencies over Middle Eastern policy—particularly, although not exclusively, with regard to Saudi Arabia—had become so profound and severe that the Atlantic allies desperately needed to harmonise policy. To achieve this outcome, in mid-December the two men planned a series of meetings for early January 1956, designed expressly to get the alliance back on track in time for Eden’s American visit in late January.²³²

Soon after this conversation, Macmillan and Dulles also exchanged words. Macmillan apparently relied on Shuckburgh’s brief to some extent, although his discourse swapped Shuckburgh’s confrontational mien for more tact and subtlety. Instead of pressing a line that British relationships with Gulf clients represented the *apex* of Western assets in the region, he suggested to Dulles that these relationships were “valuable.” Dulles would have been hard pressed to dispute this point. He granted that Britain had to protect its Gulf prerogatives, but voiced his conviction that London should also recognise special United States positions in Saudi Arabia as assets of value, since these arrangements insured access to strategic points, important military bases, and vast amounts of petroleum for the Free World. Dulles also condemned British propensities for

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² C.A.E. Shuckburgh to I. Kirkpatrick, 16 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/3G; *Descent*, 15 December 1955, p. 311. WCD, 20 November 1955 and H. Hoover Memorandum, 28 November 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 430 describe the origins of Eden’s trip to Washington; see also the *Times*, 24 November 1955, p. 10.

acting without consulting Washington, especially where the United States had interests.²³³ A few days later, the two argued again, each emphasising the importance of his country's Persian Gulf position.²³⁴ By this point, Dulles and Macmillan could not even establish a consensus on how to rank, let alone protect, Western regional interests.

This crisis provided Makins with yet another opportunity to display his acumen, and he once again delivered impressive results. In contrast to bitter verbal melees and bickering that had erupted around the world between American and British diplomats, Makins and Hoover constructively discussed the future of Saudi-Western ties. Makins calmly reviewed Foreign Office perspectives, emphasising its widespread fears Saudi Arabia might eventually overrun British Gulf clients. Hoover responded well to Makins' measured tones, agreeing with his assessment of Saudi waywardness. He noted a growing schism in Saudi-American relations, but advocated embracing Saudi Arabia through re-establishment of close and friendly relations, rather than bellicose policies which wrote off the kingdom entirely. Belligerency only opened doors for Moscow, who, Hoover explained, currently strove to exploit existing Saudi-Western differences. Looming Saudi Security Council appeals constituted an issue of particular concern. At this forum, Soviet representatives could score an important propaganda victory by offering full support to Riyadh. The United States, stuck between two important allies, would have to abstain, in the process furthering Saudi alienation.²³⁵

A few days later, when this Saudi appeal appeared imminent, Dulles—who shared Hoover's Security Council anxieties—conveyed yet another message to Whitehall, strongly requesting Britain return to arbitration or some other form of peaceful

²³³ Memcon: H. Macmillan and J.F. Dulles, 15 December 1955, PRO FO 371/114559 E1021/2G contains British accounts of this exchange, while *FRUS 1955-57 XIV* no. 464 has an American version. These records are very similar.

²³⁴ Editor's Note, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 197; Wilkinson, *Frontiers*, p. 324.

²³⁵ H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 20 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 199.

adjudication. This advice renewed the spiral of Anglo-American acrimony, particularly because Dulles warned London he felt no commitment to support Britain in the event of a Saudi petition. He also invoked the guarantee Truman had proffered five years earlier, promising American defence of Saudi territorial integrity.²³⁶ His dispatches reflected a National Security Council consensus that Britain acted at Buraimi to “maintain [British] oil rights against Saudi claims” without considering larger Cold War issues, and this economic fixation “created certain problems for the United States.”²³⁷

Britain politely rejected Dulles’ observations. Caccia informed American Embassy personnel the 1950 guarantee was a *non sequitur* in the present context, since Buraimi lay outside Saudi territory. He also dismissed the dangers of Saudi Security Council appeals. If Riyadh took such steps, Britain could provide a “very unhappy experience...[by] making public certain documents...[to] place Saudi [Arabia] in a most unflattering light.” On this issue, Caccia and his American counterparts talked past each other. For Britain, securing a Security Council victory enjoyed primacy. State Department concerns, by contrast, transcended narrow ‘win-loss’ calculations and encompassed broader Cold War considerations, such as the future of Saudi-Western relations. Finally, Caccia ruled out re-establishing any negotiations, arbitration, or other ‘neutral oversight.’ Such arrangements were anathema to London because they necessarily took account of disputed-area popular opinion. Caccia admitted local sentiment ran against Britain and its Gulf clients, which correspondingly limited chances of British success.²³⁸

The year ended at this disturbing impasse. 1955 had been tumultuous in the Arabian Peninsula, and Anglo-American leaders could only hope their upcoming summit

²³⁶ DOS to US Embassy London, 23 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 200.

²³⁷ 271st NSC Meeting, 22 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 88.

might modulate strategic disparities by establishing some common Persian Gulf policy. Unfortunately, deterioration in Anglo-Saudi and Anglo-American relations only accelerated, as Washington and London continued down their separate paths.

²³⁸ US Embassy London to DOS, 29 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 202. Caccia blamed Saudi "bribery and corruption" for anti-British feeling in disputed areas.

Epilogue and Conclusion

In the halcyon days of early 1955, key Anglo-American Middle Eastern strategic initiatives stood at the brink of fruition. Dulles' plan for organising a Northern Tier grouping under Cold War auspices had matured to a point where its success seemed inevitable, and British leaders knew this coalition would accomplish their objectives as well. Responsibility for adjudicating Anglo-Saudi boundary disputes rested with arbitrators, rather than with intimidation and naked force. And, by initiating *Alpha*, Western peacemakers set Arabs and Israelis on a path of reconciliation, which, if successful, might seal the region from Soviet opportunism.

However, unfavourable trends quickly compromised these apparent breakthroughs. For Washington, the speed and extent to which Moscow broke the West's previous monopoly of influence sparked serious alarm. Egyptian, Syrian, and to a lesser extent Saudi estrangement translated into significant Soviet footholds, including extensive military and commercial transactions, thereby fraying Middle Eastern containment structures. Vast regional hydrocarbon reserves "vital for [Western] European industry and military establishments" magnified the impact of these Cold War setbacks.¹ Intensification of the Kremlin's political and economic offensive, and accelerating Communist technological and industrial capabilities, including advanced nuclear weaponry, suggested no diminution of Soviet success.²

In Britain's case, consolidation of strategic positions upon which Britain depended for economic vitality failed to materialise in 1955. Instead, rapid Hashemite-Gulf erosion ensued, a trend which, if allowed to proceed unchecked, imperilled British national interests. Jordan's failure to join the Baghdad Pact was the most dramatic, but hardly only, example of this deterioration. By late 1955, Iraq stood nearly alone in the

Arab world, susceptible to radical Arab nationalism, with all its negative implications for status quo preservation.³

In 1956, Washington and London placed a high priority on mitigating these setbacks through collaborative efforts. However, to an even greater extent than in 1955, Atlantic unity proved elusive. Although both Britain and the United States perceived vital interests to be at risk, assessments regarding the nature of, and proper responses to, these threats varied significantly. Consequently, British and American leaders found policy coordination to be impossible. In essence, by 1956 Eden fought an increasingly desperate rearguard action, attempting to dampen nationalist fervour throughout the entire Hashemite-Gulf Arch, while forestalling Saudi competition in the Persian Gulf. In prosecuting this struggle, some factors did operate in Eden's favour, such as diminution of direct Soviet *military* threats in the Middle East.⁴ Since British planners assessed as very low to non-existent the probability of open Communist aggression, Whitehall could shift all resources toward containing Egyptian and Saudi challenges.⁵ By 1956 the Baghdad Pact served as a major political weapon in these efforts.⁶ For this and other reasons, Britain sought to enhance the Pact's profile, while expanding its presence in that coalition. With even greater frequency than he had exhibited during the previous year, Eden urgently petitioned Washington, seeking American membership, material support,

¹ Memcon: J.F. Dulles and M. Mansfield, 2 April 1956, JFD:GCMS Box 1.

² NSC Memorandum, 13 February 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XIX* no. 57.

³ COSC (56) 31st Meeting, 13 March 1956, PRO FO 371/121494 VJ1051/100G; UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 18 May 1956, PRO FO 371/121495 VJ1051/126; COS Memorandum, 3 July 1956, *BDEEP:CG&EE* no. 51.

⁴ J. Watson Memorandum, 20 February 1956, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 627.

⁵ MOD Memorandum, 21 February 1956, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 628; A. Eden Memorandum, 15 June 1956, *BDEEP:CG&EE* no. 25.

⁶ FO & MOD Memorandum, 28 June 1956, PRO FO 371 UEE 10062/4; CPRC Memorandum, 1 June 1956, *BDEEP:CG&EE* no. 21.

and assistance against ESS resources.⁷ Success on these fronts would, of course, strengthen his faction in the intra-Arab struggle.

However, formidable pan-Arabism threatened to overwhelm any British advantages in concentrated resources accruing from diminished Soviet military threats. Through his charisma and widespread popularity Nasser dominated timing and tempo in the ESS-Baghdad Pact struggle, forcing Eden into a reactive cycle. A defensive British strategy appeared to yield satisfactory results in early 1956, particularly in Jordan, where tensions eased from their late-1955 fever pitch. A new round of upheaval in March 1956 nonetheless demonstrated the serious long-term liabilities of a defensive approach to protecting the Hashemite-Gulf Arch. Hussein's decision to cashier Glubb meant the Arab Legion now served under Jordanian authority, so British officials lacked assurance regarding the reliability of its leadership in the event of domestic or international crises.⁸ While Nasser did not directly orchestrate this episode, Hussein, in relieving Glubb, obviously reacted to forces Nasser had set into motion. Simultaneous disturbances in the Persian Gulf exacerbated British frustration.⁹ That more robust measures had become necessary in the intra-Arab struggle was obvious, but the challenges of developing, implementing, and justifying assertive procedures proved insurmountable until Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal.¹⁰

⁷ US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 23 January 1956, USNA RG 59 686A.87/1-2356; J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Baghdad, 24 January 1956, USNA RG 59 686A.87/1-2456; US Embassy Baghdad to DOS, 21 February 1956, USNA RG 59 686A.87/2-2156; and W. Rountree to A.N. Overby, 24 May 1956, USNA RG 59 686A.87/4-2355 describe an interesting aspect of ongoing Anglo-Hashemite attempts to neutralise ESS resources. Nuri pressed American officials to audit various United States bank accounts, hoping to locate and curtail Saudi expenditures. The Treasury Department apparently undertook such audits, but opposed disclosing the results to London or Baghdad.

⁸ A. Nutting Memorandum, 6 March 1956, PRO FO 371/121492 VJ1051/55G. The full story regarding Glubb's ouster remains to be told, since at least one-quarter of the relevant British documents (FO folders 121540-544) remain closed.

⁹ GHQMEFL to PRPG, 11 March 1956, PRO DEFE 11/77.

¹⁰ In Spring 1956 British officials outlined some "firm measures" for use against Egypt, but did not implement them, partly, perhaps, due to Ambassador Trevelyan's strong critique. See A. Watson to H. Trevelyan, 22 March and 6 April 1956, PRO FO 371/118862 JE1053/20G; Dorril, pp. 610-17; Takeyh, "Pan-Arabism" Chapter 6.

In 1956, British strategy in the Arabian Peninsula followed familiar lines. ‘Masked firmness’—in which Britain continued to reinforce its Arabian military capabilities¹¹ while feigning interest in Anglo-Saudi boundary negotiations—predominated.¹² The Foreign Office opposed reversing territorial gains accrued through *Bonaparte*, and initiating sincere talks with Riyadh, but paid lip service to such notions to preclude Saudi legal remedies. These disingenuous efforts quickly approached farce, and probably inflicted additional damage on Anglo-Saudi relations.¹³ However, London needed some way to defuse growing American pressure for a negotiated solution, yet avoid any sacrifice.

Washington had recently intensified efforts for peaceful Eastern Arabian settlements since accommodating King Saud played a paramount role in the United States response to adverse Middle Eastern developments. This trend became discernable by late 1955,¹⁴ and evolved considerably with Eisenhower’s February 1956 decision to proceed with weapons sales to Saudi Arabia¹⁵ despite severe domestic criticism and pressure for expanded arms sales to Israel.¹⁶ Eisenhower’s initiative neared maturity in early March commensurate with an upsurge in Egyptian intransigence,¹⁷ finally emerging full-bore in

¹¹ D.M.H. Riches Minute, 3 March 1956, *BDEEP:E&DME III* no. 627; A. Eden to W. Monckton, 29 April 1956, PRO DEFE 11/77; Cabinet Memorandum, 1 May 1956, *BDEEP:CG&EE* no. 47; COS Memorandum, 3 July 1956, *BDEEP:CG&EE* no. 51. COSC/JPS Memorandum, 20 July 1956, PRO DEFE 11/77 indicates British anticipation of renewed Anglo-Saudi hostilities.

¹² CRO Memorandum, 19 July 1956, PRO FO 371/120589 EA1081/284.

¹³ PRO CAB 129 (56) CP 52, 24 February 1956; D.M.H. Riches Memorandum, 31 October 1956, PRO FO 371/120589 EA1081/297. Douglas Dodds-Parker’s mission to Saudi Arabia in late April 1956 is representative of British strategy. See I. Kirkpatrick Minute, 18 April 1956, PRO FO 371/120766 ES1051/25; S. Lloyd to D. Dodds-Parker, 24 April 1956, PRO FO 371/120766 ES1051/31 and JS-BD (Box 5 Book 1), 20 May 1956. Dodds-Parker, p. 196, has a first-hand account.

¹⁴ US Embassy Jeddah to DOS, 7 July 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 239 describes a 13 December 1955 JCS decision to “make...concessions to Saudi Arabia to protect American national interests and strengthen the special United States position there.”

¹⁵ H. Hoover Memorandum, 21 February 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 217; *Economist*, 25 February 1956, p. 511; H. Hoover to J.F. Dulles, 5 March 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XV* no. 161.

¹⁶ See, for instance, criticism from Senator Hubert Humphrey (D-MN), 16 & 17 February 1956, 84th Congress, 2nd Session, *CR* pp. 2671, 2802.

¹⁷ 279th NSC Meeting, 8 March 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XV* no. 178.

April when Dulles recalled Ambassador Wadsworth for consultations.¹⁸ Having watched two-thirds of ESS defect to Moscow, and in the midst of rumours that Saudi Arabia might soon follow suit, United States authorities made every effort to forestall such an outcome.¹⁹

This decision to cultivate Saudi good graces helps explain American rejections of repeated British entreaties for United States accession to the Baghdad Pact.²⁰ For the Foreign Office, the Pact achieved British aims—extension of the Anglo-Iraqi alliance—but for Dulles the Pact represented strategic deficiency. Even in its original conception the Pact was, after all, only a means to the larger end of containment, and in that capacity it failed.²¹ Consequently Dulles had no remorse about shifting to other, more efficacious Cold War tactics. Mending, rather than widening, the Saudi-Hashemite breach played an important role in his latest approach, despite British opposition to such efforts.²² Dulles wanted to provide Riyadh every possible incentive to reject Soviet overtures, curtail funding for anti-Western regional elements, and maintain its Free World ties.

Nasser's decision to nationalise the Suez Canal in July 1956 underscored Anglo-American strategic incompatibilities. Many have described the events subsequent to that momentous act; no repetition is necessary here.²³ However, some aspects of that crisis warrant attention within the context of this study. First, the Suez Crisis coincided with intensification of White House plans to pull Saudi Arabia away from ESS, and into an unambiguous Western alignment. Soon after the crisis began, Eisenhower and King Saud

¹⁸ Memcon: J.F. Dulles, H. Hoover, and W. Rountree, 31 March 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 321.

¹⁹ UK Embassy Jeddah to FO, 5 April 1956, PRO FO 371/120755 ES1021/23; Telecon: D. Eisenhower and J.F. Dulles, 10 April 1956, DDED Box 15.

²⁰ J.F. Dulles to US Embassy Baghdad, 8 February 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 96; Memcon: J.F. Dulles and S. Lloyd, 5 March 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XV* no. 172; and A. Eden Minute, 7 March 1956, PRO FO 371/121271 V1075/61G describe rejections of frantic British efforts to secure American membership.

²¹ J.F. Dulles to C. Wilson, 23 April 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 126.

²² I. Samuel Minute, 29 March 1956, PRO FO 371/120755 ES1021/21; UK Embassy Baghdad to FO, 6 April 1956, PRO FO 371/120755 ES1021/26. See also Podeh, "Rapprochement", pp. 91-94.

²³ S. Lucas, *Divided*, is probably the best single-volume account of the Suez Crisis.

initiated a series of highly-classified correspondence, discussing Saudi-American mutual interests and common perspectives.²⁴ Meanwhile, written exchanges between the President and Eden illustrated the degree to which these two men held disparate ideas on Middle Eastern affairs.²⁵ Thus, Anglo-American relations steadily cooled, while ties between Washington and Riyadh moved conversely. When Anglo-French-Israeli forces initiated operations at Suez, Eisenhower had little doubt the United States should make every effort to strengthen Saudi Arabia's regional position, at British expense if necessary.²⁶

Presidential perceptions on this issue had significant ramifications. While Anglo-French forces steamed toward Suez, Eisenhower dispatched a Marine battalion to the Persian Gulf in defence of Saudi oil fields,²⁷ after American officials predicted trouble in the Persian Gulf,²⁸ perhaps in the form of renewed Anglo-Saudi hostilities. More importantly, following the Suez cease-fire American leaders considered, but rejected, the Baghdad Pact as the instrument upon which Washington would reconstitute Western regional positions, despite immense British pressure to do so.²⁹ This decision owed in large part to fears that a wholesale American shift to the Pact might offend Saudi sensibilities, thereby halting an ongoing trend of Saudi realignment.³⁰ Instead, the so-called 'Eisenhower Doctrine' underpinned American policy in the wake of Suez. Dedicated Presidential attempts to solidify Saudi-American bonds—exemplified by King

²⁴ D. Eisenhower to King Saud, 23 August 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XVI* no. 122, 8 October 1956, DDE:IS Box 46, and 16 November 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XVI* no. 580; King Saud to D. Eisenhower, 24 August 1956, 14, 16, & 25 September 1956, 18 & 30 October 1956, and 11 November 1956, DDE:IS Box 46.

²⁵ D. Eisenhower to A. Eden, 3 September 1956, PRO PREM 11/1100 is representative.

²⁶ Memcon: D. Eisenhower and H. Hoover, 19 November 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XVI* no. 589. Memcon: J.F. Dulles and W. Cook, 28 February 1957, PRO FO 371/126925 EA1081/15 is also significant.

²⁷ Memcon: D. Eisenhower, J.F. Dulles, R. Murphy, A. Dulles, N. Twining, 16 July 1958, *FRUS 1958-60 XII* no. 22.

²⁸ Telecon: J.F. Dulles and A. Dulles, 1 November 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XVI* no. 458.

²⁹ R. Murphy to W. Rountree, 3 December 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 157; A.D.M. Ross Memorandum, 6 December 1956, PRO FO 371/121274 V1075/147.

Saud's White House visit in early 1957—represented a key facet of this new doctrine.³¹

Although most analysts have labeled the Eisenhower Doctrine a failure,³² at least in that capacity it succeeded.

A final aspect of the Suez crisis relevant to this study pivots on Eden's January 1957 resignation. His political departure ended a difficult era in Anglo-American relations. Although British and American leaders still diverged somewhat regarding Middle Eastern policy, no longer did reflexive unilateralism impede Atlantic cooperation. The pervasive lack of confidence characteristic of alliance interaction during the Eden premiership also faded significantly. Strategic differences remained, to be sure. Eden's successor, Macmillan, attempted to salvage the remnants of the Hashemite-Gulf Arch, even when doing so conflicted with American assessments. The Prime Minister's Summer 1957 decision for military intervention in Oman exemplifies Macmillan's assertiveness in defence of vital British interests.³³ On this and other occasions, however, he took pains to arrange prior consultation with Washington, informing his Cabinet colleagues of the "definite" necessity of preliminary alliance coordination.³⁴ Consequently, British and American leaders had a forum in which to discuss viewpoints before decisions became final. This contrasted with earlier approaches, where mistrust predominated, 'discussion' ensued only after events reached irreversibility, and assumed the form of blame-apportionment and heated mutual remonstrations. On such issues, after all, alliances ultimately prosper or perish.

³⁰ H. Hoover to W. Gallman, 20 November 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 146; Telecon: D. Eisenhower and J.F. Dulles, 8 December 1956, *FRUS 1955-57 XII* no. 166; King Saud to D. Eisenhower, 13 December 1956, DDE:IS Box 46.

³¹ DOS Memorandum, 30 January 1957; W.B. Macomber to D. Eisenhower and J.F. Dulles, 1 February 1957, DDE:IS Box 46.

³² See, for instance, Ashton, *Problem*, pp. 109-13.

³³ PRO CAB 129 (57) CP 138, 7 June 1957. Shepard, pp. 31-42 is a first-hand account of British intervention in Oman. Memcon: D. Eisenhower and J.F. Dulles, 3 August 1957, *FRUS 1955-57 XIII* no. 154 illustrates American anxiety over this campaign.

³⁴ PRO CAB 128 (57) 54th and 56th Conclusions, 18 and 23 July 1957. See also Joyce, *Sultanate*, pp. 57, 59.

British and American leaders share blame for this unsuccessful phase in their Cold War relationship. Dulles' decision to build Middle Eastern security coalitions proved an unmitigated disaster. The unintended and unanticipated consequences emanating from his Northern Tier concept devastated containment, while accelerating alliance tensions and regional hostility. In reflecting upon this catastrophe, the analyst can only wonder why Dulles believed covert or overt American participation might enable Middle Eastern collective security to transcend traditional rivalries, Hashemite opportunism, and Israeli antipathy to Arab coalitions. His flawed assumptions, which probably resulted from his relative inexperience regarding Middle Eastern affairs, reflect overconfidence to the point of hubris; he really had no legitimate basis for these beliefs.

Dulles also underestimated the capacity of Middle Eastern states for independent action, failing, for instance, to foresee the emergence of an Egyptian, Syrian, and Saudi alliance to rival his own paradigm. Among other evidence, Arab conferences in late 1954 should have alerted Dulles regarding potentially negative reactions to his plans, but he unwisely persisted. Once this rival grouping emerged, the Secretary of State also failed to forestall the ensuing cycle of threats, recrimination, and naked opportunism. Particularly damaging to regional stability were Iraqi and Turkish ambitions in Syria in Spring 1955.

Not only did Dulles miscalculate Arab assertiveness; he also misjudged Tel Aviv. If Israeli leaders perceived certain policies—such as border raids—as in their national interest, they implemented them, regardless of American suggestions. Furthermore, Dulles was overly sanguine about bypassing domestic opposition. Israel's supporters in Congress, realising Arab 'lip service' regarding the Soviet threat in fact imposed precious little restraint, rejected his rationale for expanding American assistance in the Middle East. That weaponry constituted a significant portion of this assistance complicated matters. Loud Arab pleas for military aid and sales persuaded Eisenhower and Dulles to

authorise such assistance; by doing so, they hoped to curtail growing anti-Western feelings in Iraq and elsewhere, while diminishing odds these states might turn to Moscow in desperation.

Although his fears were legitimate, Dulles failed to consider a fundamental issue: *why Arab nations sought arms in the first place*. Primarily they wanted weaponry in the context of their struggle against Israel. American leaders thus pursued contradictory policies, as their efforts to limit Soviet entrée by supplying weapons simultaneously intensified an Arab-Israeli arms race, which in turn expanded Soviet opportunities. This self-defeating interplay destroyed Dulles' plans. Even in hindsight, acceptable answers to these problems remain elusive. Since these challenges ultimately flowed from the Arab-Israeli conflict, apparently the only solution—perhaps unattainable in the 1950s—was an all-out bid for a Middle Eastern settlement *preceding* any formal security arrangements. Of course, constraints on financial and political beneficence limited Western efforts such as *Alpha* and *Gamma*, but as is now obvious, the political, social, and economic costs of continued Arab-Israeli conflict proved staggeringly high.

For all Dulles' Middle Eastern blunders, he recognised an important axiom: upon finding oneself in a hole, stop digging. When in 1955 events demonstrated the bankruptcy of his initial formulations, he learned from the experience, discarding his earlier cavalier attitudes and subsequently adopting a more realistic stance regarding the limits of American power. His counterparts in Britain, however, came to this realisation more slowly. The Templer mission to Jordan epitomised a British tendency to overestimate its Middle Eastern power and influence. In willful disregard of Jordanian public opinion, Whitehall gambled its allies in Jordan's government could implement unpopular policies without incurring significant cost.

Although memories of the 1948 Wathbah haunted Shuckburgh as he formulated Jordanian initiatives, on balance British leaders failed to learn appropriate lessons from their earlier debacle in Iraq. Nationalism, in tandem with formidable ‘mass media’ influence, had catalysed a quantum shift in the relative distribution of power between governmental elites and the population at large. Despite British expectations, not even a prestigious and high-ranking Western leader swaggering into town could offset this adverse trend, as ensuing violence and mob riots in Jordan demonstrated.

Lack of foresight regarding regional developments also hindered British strategy in the Persian Gulf. After numerous chances for Eastern Arabian frontier settlement had come and gone, by 1955 British leaders found themselves with a single alternative: boundary resolution through military force. In fairness to Britain, Saudi Arabia bears equal, or perhaps even preponderant, responsibility for squandered opportunities. However, at certain key points, London selected hard-line policies, where reasonable compromise may have yielded a breakthrough. When, for instance, British negotiators refused to accommodate Ibn Saud’s pre-World War Two desiderata, they lost a chance not only to secure frontier arrangements, but also to retain under formal legal auspices those positions—such as Buraimi and Liwa—that later caused so much Anglo-Saudi contention. As events spiraled toward crisis, Britain therefore lacked explicit defence against rival claims, forcing the Foreign Office to resort to ambiguous accusations about Saudi “bribery, subversion, and intimidation.” By rejecting disputed-area ‘neutral zones’ in early 1952, Britain lost another opportunity in the Arabian Peninsula. IPC participation in such momentous decisions only exacerbated questionable Foreign Office assumptions regarding Eastern Arabian destinies. Commercial enterprises generally lack the broad geopolitical outlook necessary in formulating sound strategy. ARAMCO had similarly

parochial perspectives, although the influence of this consortium in official circles appears to have been considerably less than that of IPC.

Eden's secrecy warrants analysis. For the Prime Minister, this characteristic became nearly habitual, although late 1955 witnessed a brief hiatus. Britain informed American leaders of its initiatives in Jordan and Oman shortly *before* implementing them. In both cases, however, prior consultation proved disappointing. Regarding Jordan, Dulles suggested Eden and Macmillan delay a schedule the Cabinet had already approved. With respect to Oman, American leaders went one step further, requesting that Eden reverse his policy. Dulles even threatened to circumvent Whitehall and deal directly with British clients if necessary.

For Eden, these episodes probably confirmed his pessimism about the value of consultation, thus reinforcing his reticence during future crises. The Prime Minister apparently only saw the short-term benefits, without noticing the long-term liabilities, of unilateralism. This strategy does not lend itself well to early repetition within an alliance context. At some point, the other party will balk, as Eden learned to his cost during the Suez crisis. A proposition that Eden may have secured some measure of American support in November 1956 had he not exhausted his alliance bona fides by earlier Middle Eastern *faits accomplis* does not stretch the bounds of logic.

Eden also failed to consider that close cooperation, even on highly-sensitive issues, had played a significant role in the Anglo-American 'special relationship' as it matured through World War Two. For example, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill shared secrets pertaining to 'Tube Alloys' and *Ultra*—dealing with atomic weaponry and Axis decrypts, respectively—while denying such information to other allies. Eden, as Foreign Secretary, knew of this collaboration, yet apparently perceived these 'technical' exchanges as distinct from cooperation regarding grand strategy and

vital national interests. Along similar lines, perhaps postwar United States legislation—such as the McMahon Act—limiting technological transfer heralded for Eden the demise of sincere Anglo-American unity even in ‘technical’ fields.

During Eden’s long years in Opposition after World War Two—which coincided with the formative stages of the Cold War Atlantic alliance—he experienced little contact with American leaders. Eden’s subsequent insularity may reflect his absence from this key phase and its political milestones, such as the Marshall Plan and creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Possibly his poor health, and the gauntlet of surgical procedures and medications he endured, also contributed to his secretive and suspicious characteristics. Such are the vicissitudes of human nature that the historian can rarely identify causation with perfect accuracy. We only know Eden preferred unilateralism and, when that approach apparently yielded greater efficacy than did consultation, he persisted in it, eventually causing his own political downfall.

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